

Victory Sports Series

47952



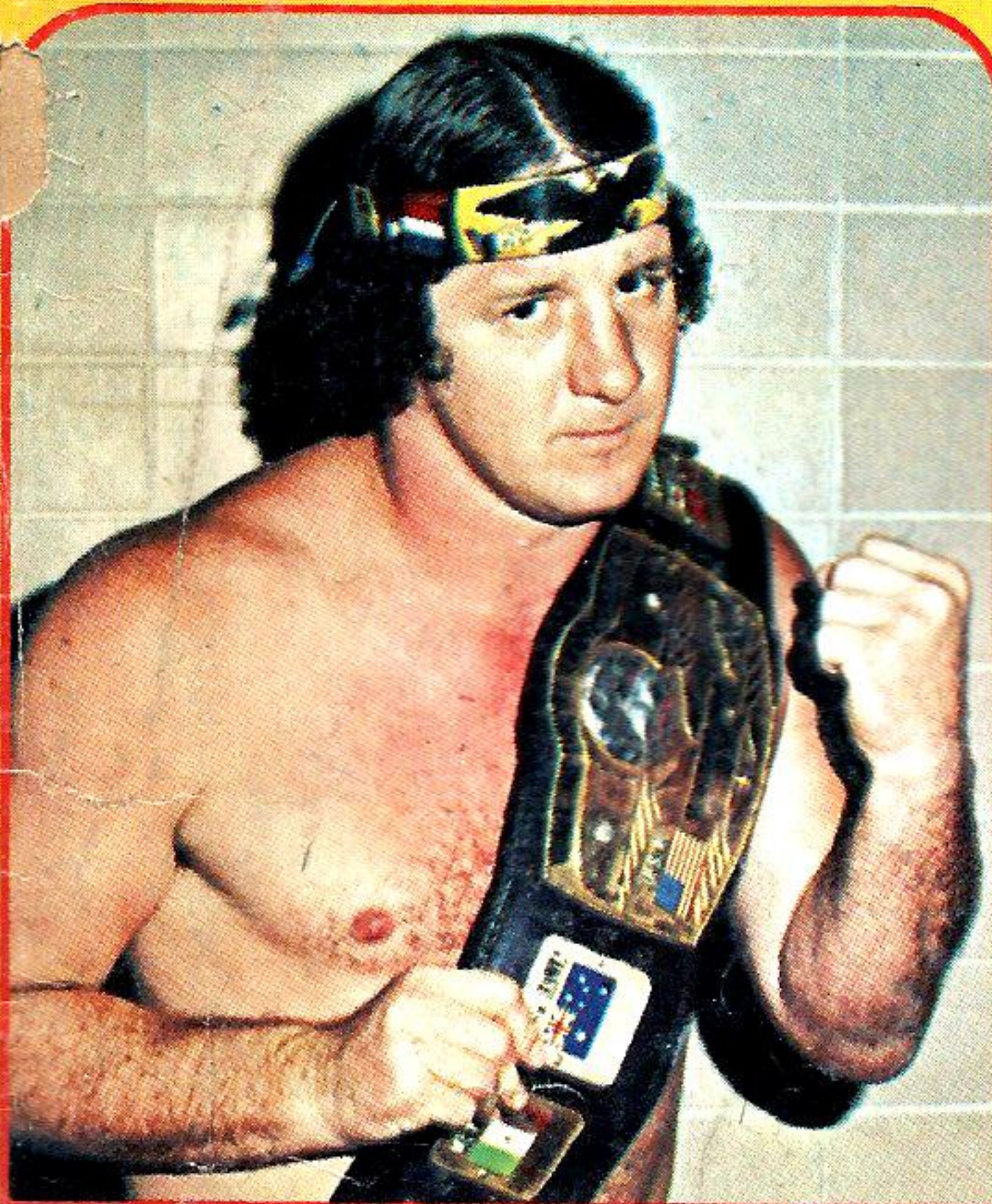
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# Wrestling

**Special Bonus  
Section:**

**FREE! YOUR 1977  
WRESTLING  
CALENDAR**

**1977 ANNUAL # 18**



**WRESTLER OF THE YEAR**  
**Terry Funk**

**TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR**  
**The Executioners**

**VILLAIN  
OF THE YEAR**  
**Stan Hansen**

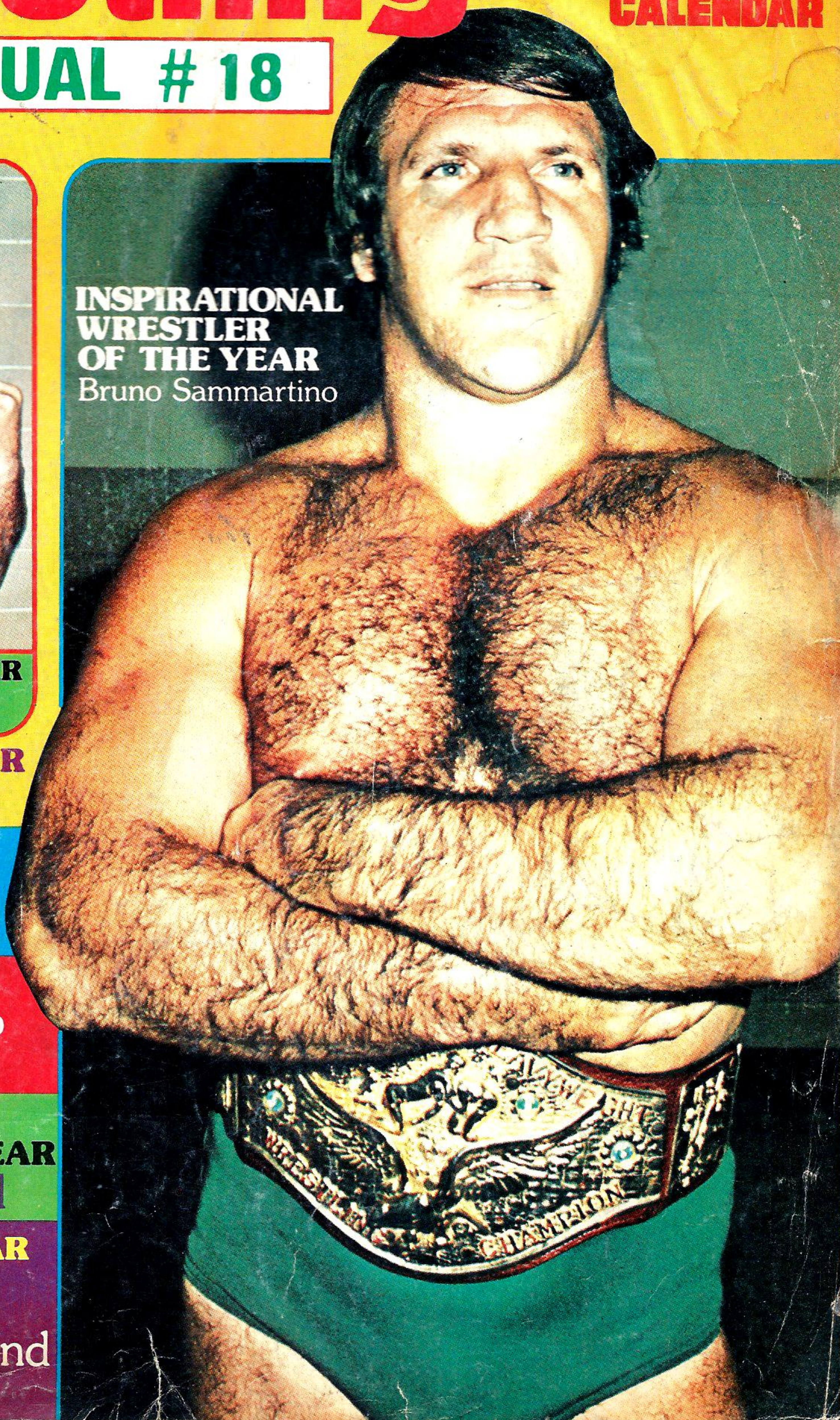
**MATCH OF THE YEAR**  
**Bruno Sammartino  
vs. Stan Hansen**

**MOST POPULAR  
WRESTLER OF THE YEAR**  
**Wahoo McDaniel**

**ROOKIE OF THE YEAR**

**Bob  
Backlund**

**INSPIRATIONAL  
WRESTLER  
OF THE YEAR**  
**Bruno Sammartino**





# OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

## WORLD WIDE WRESTLING FEDERATION

CHAMPION: BRUNO SAMMARTINO

- 1—STAN STASIAK
- 2—NIKOLAI VOLKOFF
- 3—STAN HANSEN
- 4—BRUISER BRODIE
- 5—IVAN PUTSKI
- 6—TOR KAMATA
- 7—CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW
- 8—VICTOR RIVERA
- 9—BILLY WHITE WOLF
- 10—BOBO BRAZIL

## AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

CHAMPION: NICK BOCKWINKLE

- 1—VERNE GAGNE
- 2—BILLY ROBINSON
- 3—PETER MAIVIA
- 4—BARON VON RASCHKE
- 5—BLACKJACK LANZA
- 6—BOBBY DUNCUM
- 7—GREG GAGNE
- 8—MAD DOG VACHON
- 9—JIM BRUNZELL
- 10—CHRIS TAYLOR

## MOST POPULAR

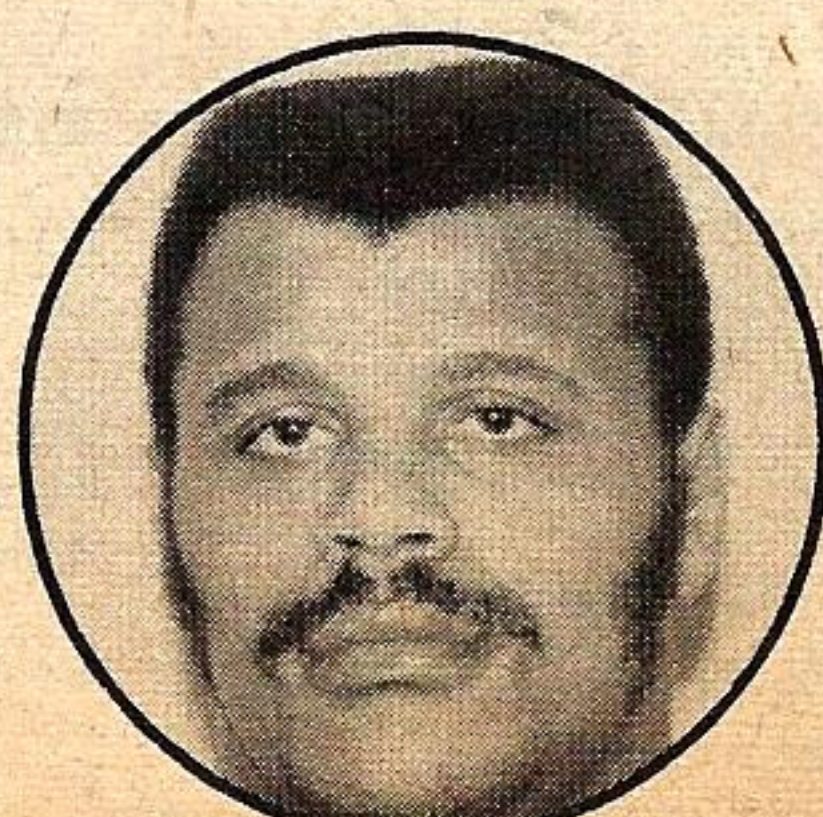
- 1—ANDRE THE GIANT
- 2—BRUNO SAMMARTINO
- 3—IVAN PUTSKI
- 4—MIL MASCARAS
- 4—DUSTY RHODES
- 6—WAHOO MCDANIEL
- 7—CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW
- 8—VICTOR RIVERA
- 9—ROCKY JOHNSON
- 10—BRUISER



IVAN PUTSKI



BARON VON RASCHKE



ROCKY JOHNSON



THE ASSASSIN

## NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

CHAMPION: TERRY FUNK

- 1—DUSTY RHODES
- 2—JACK BRISCO
- 3—ROCKY JOHNSON
- 4—BLACKJACK MULLIGAN
- 5—MR. WRESTLING II
- 6—HARLEY RACE
- 7—PAMPERO FIRPO
- 8—FRITZ VON ERICH
- 9—DORY FUNK JR.
- 10—JERRY LAWLER

## TAG TEAMS

- 1—THE EXECUTIONERS
- 2—THE ANDERSON BROTHERS
- 3—BOBBY DUNCUM & BLACKJACK LANZA
- 4—THE HOLLYWOOD BLONDS
- 5—CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW & BILLY WHITE WOLF
- 6—BOB BACKLUND & STEVE KEIRN
- 7—PAT PATTERSON & TONY GAREA
- 8—GOLIATH & BLACK GORDMAN
- 9—THE MONGOLS
- 10—GREG GAGNE & JIM BRUNZELL

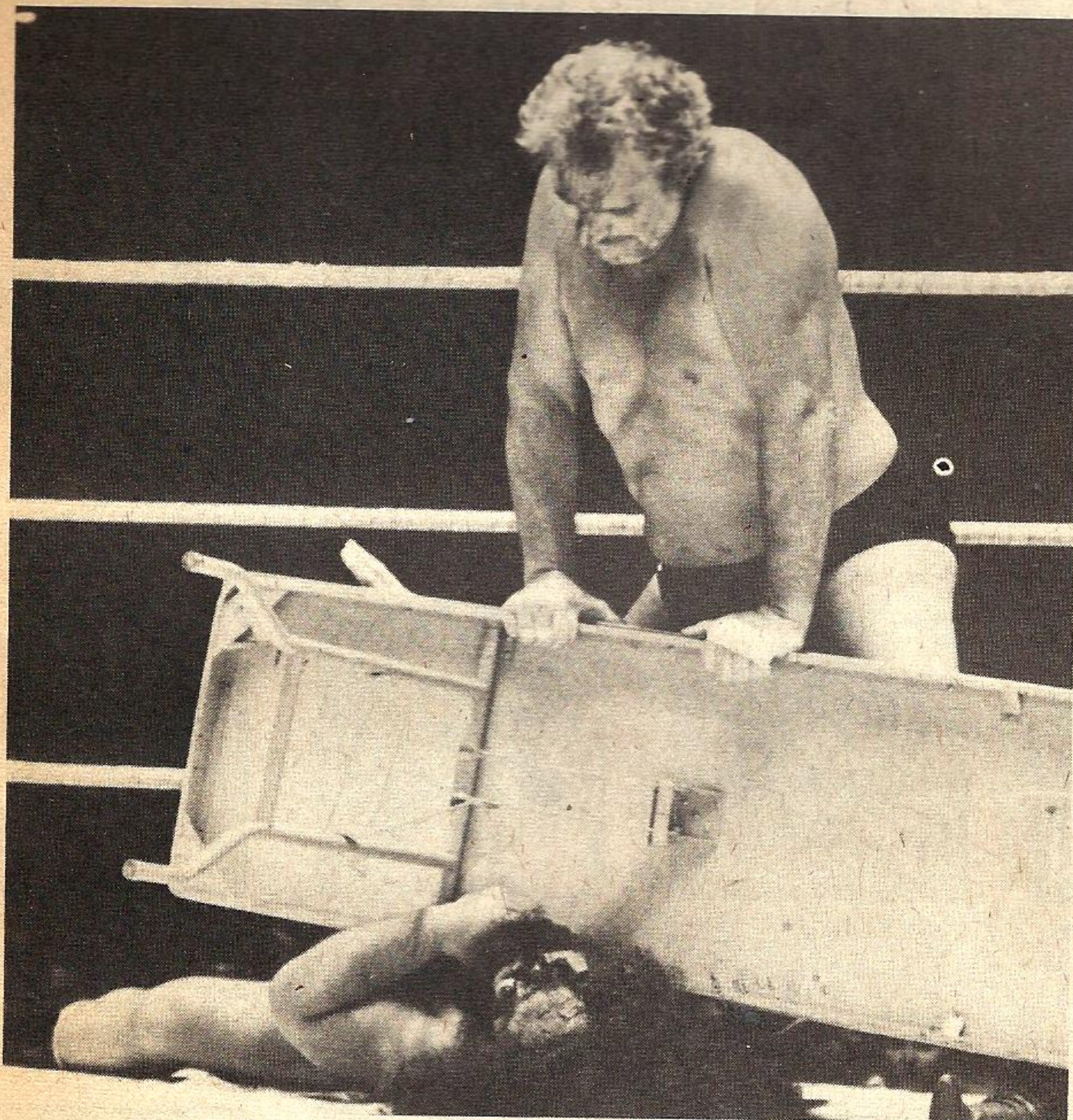
## MOST HATED

- 1—THE SHEIK
- 2—STAN HANSEN
- 3—ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER
- 4—THE ASSASSIN
- 5—NICK BOCKWINKLE
- 6—STAN STASIAK
- 7—BOBBY DUNCUM
- 8—MR. FUGI
- 9—BRUISER BRODIE
- 10—MAD DOG VACHON

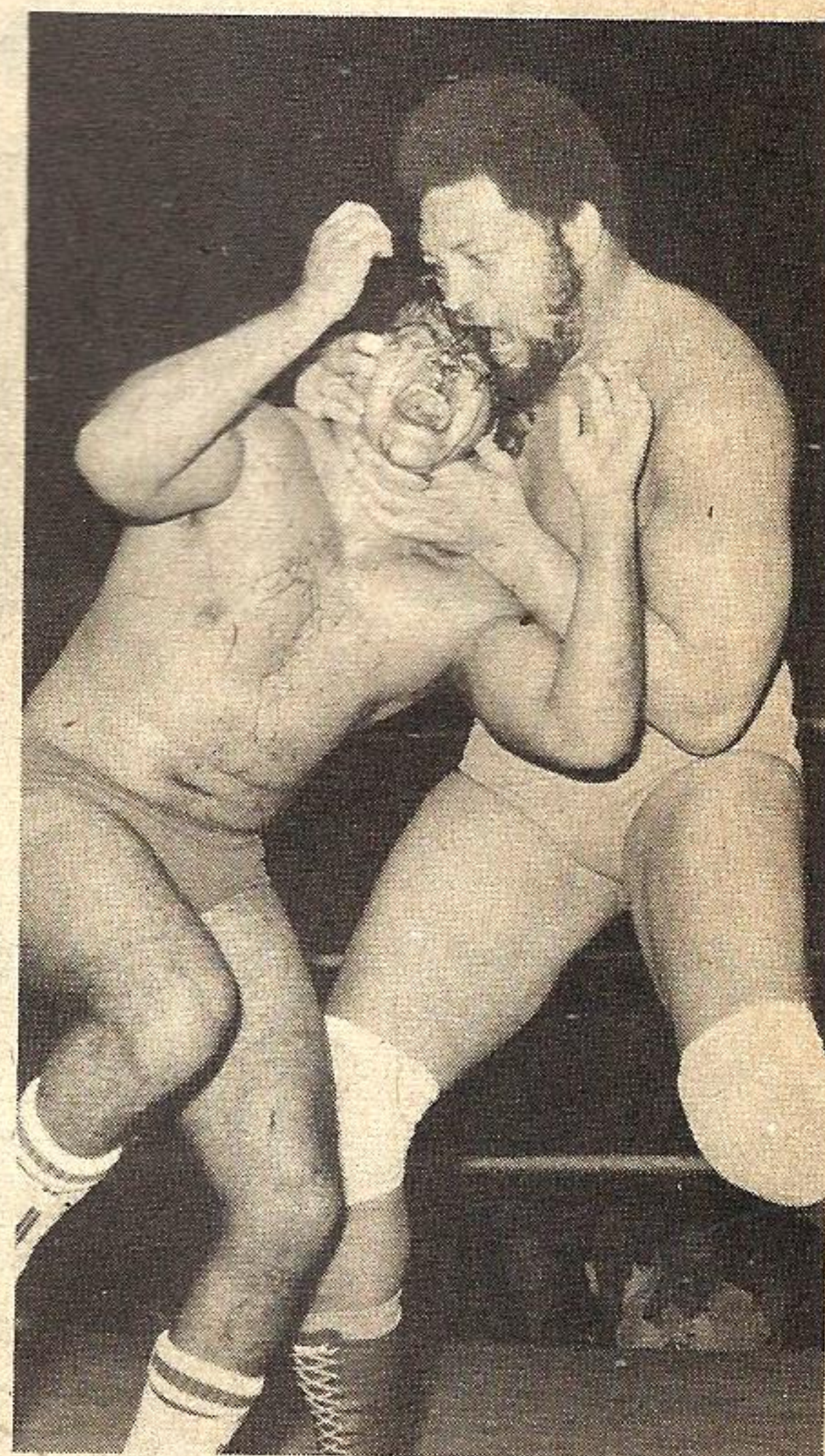
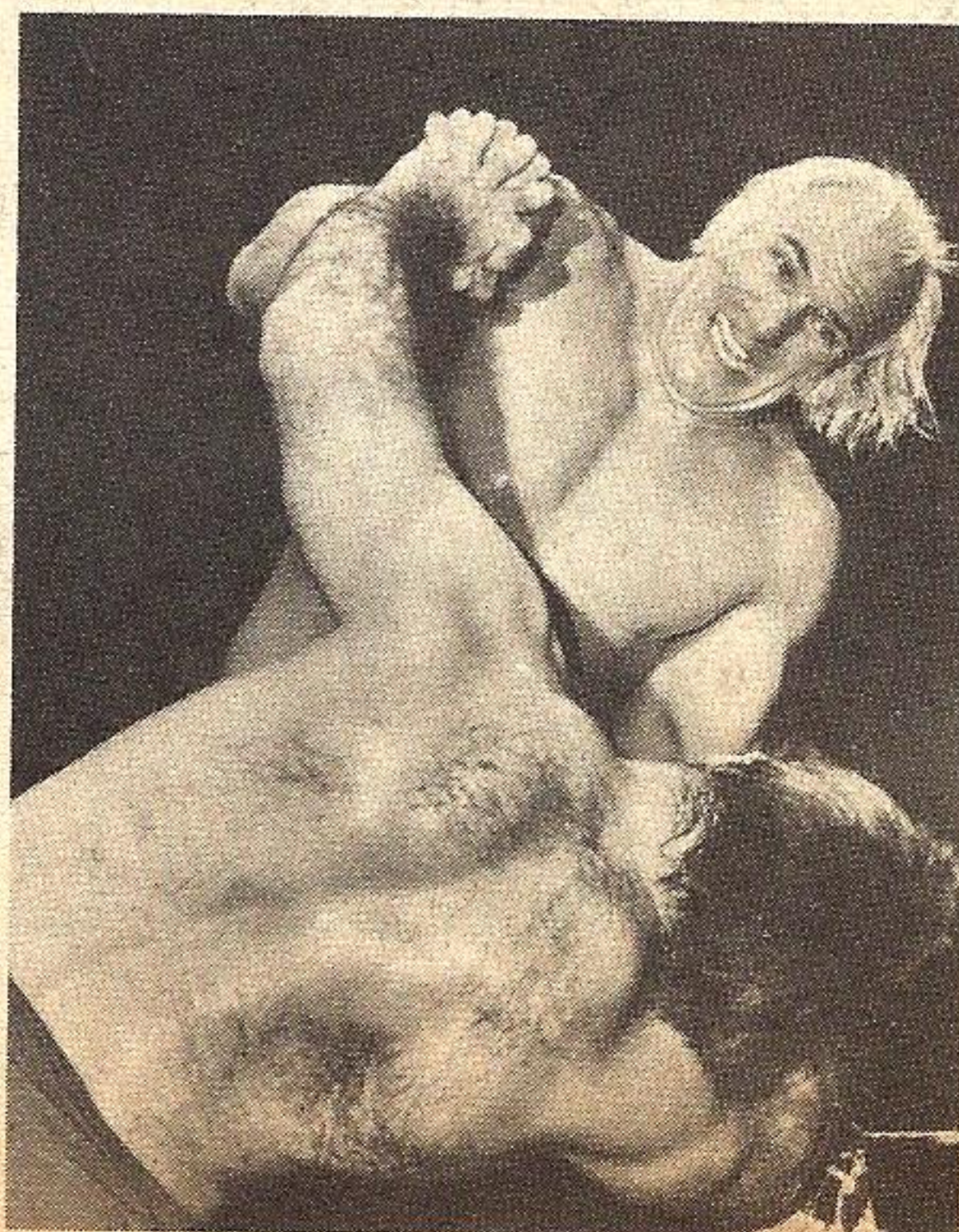
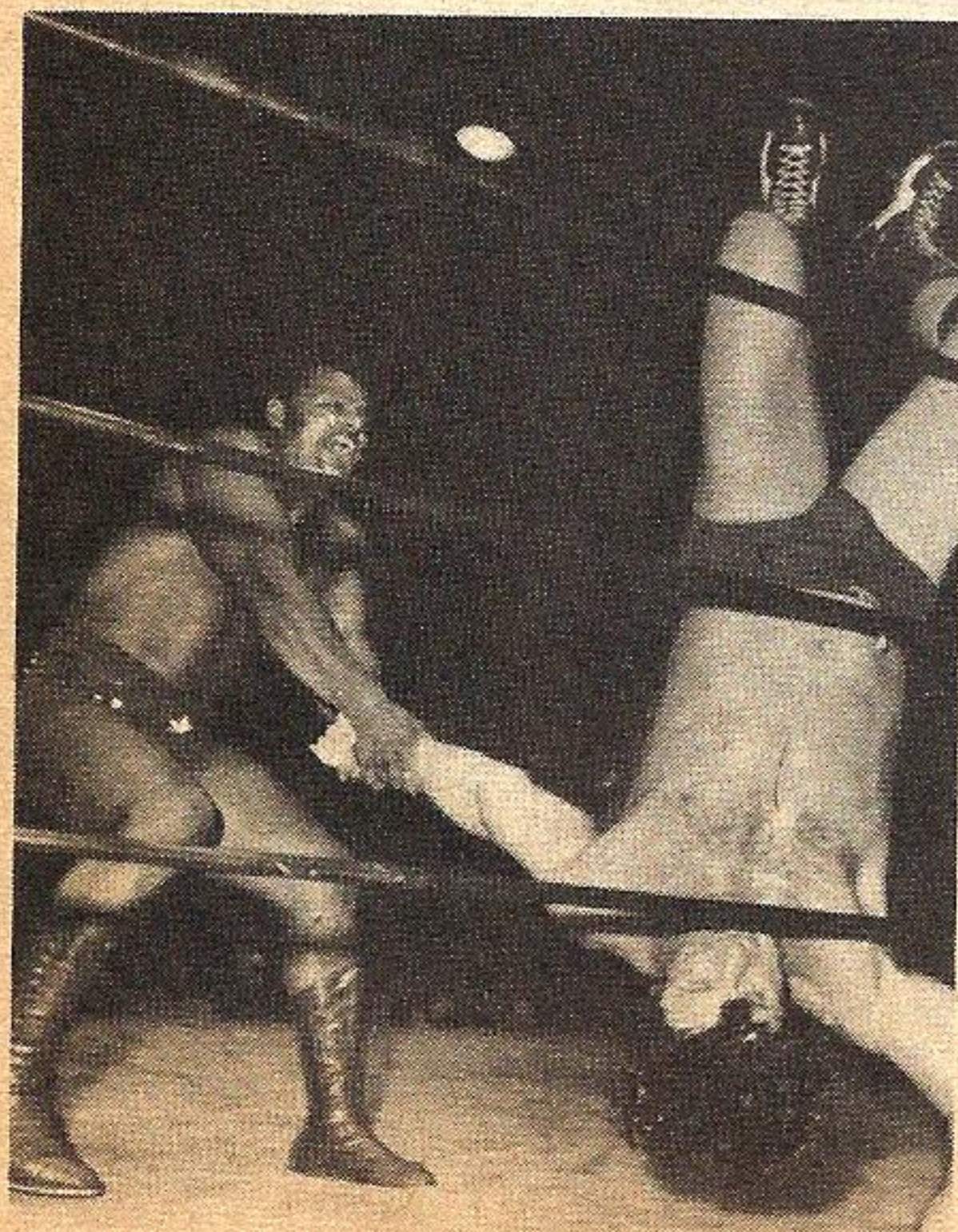




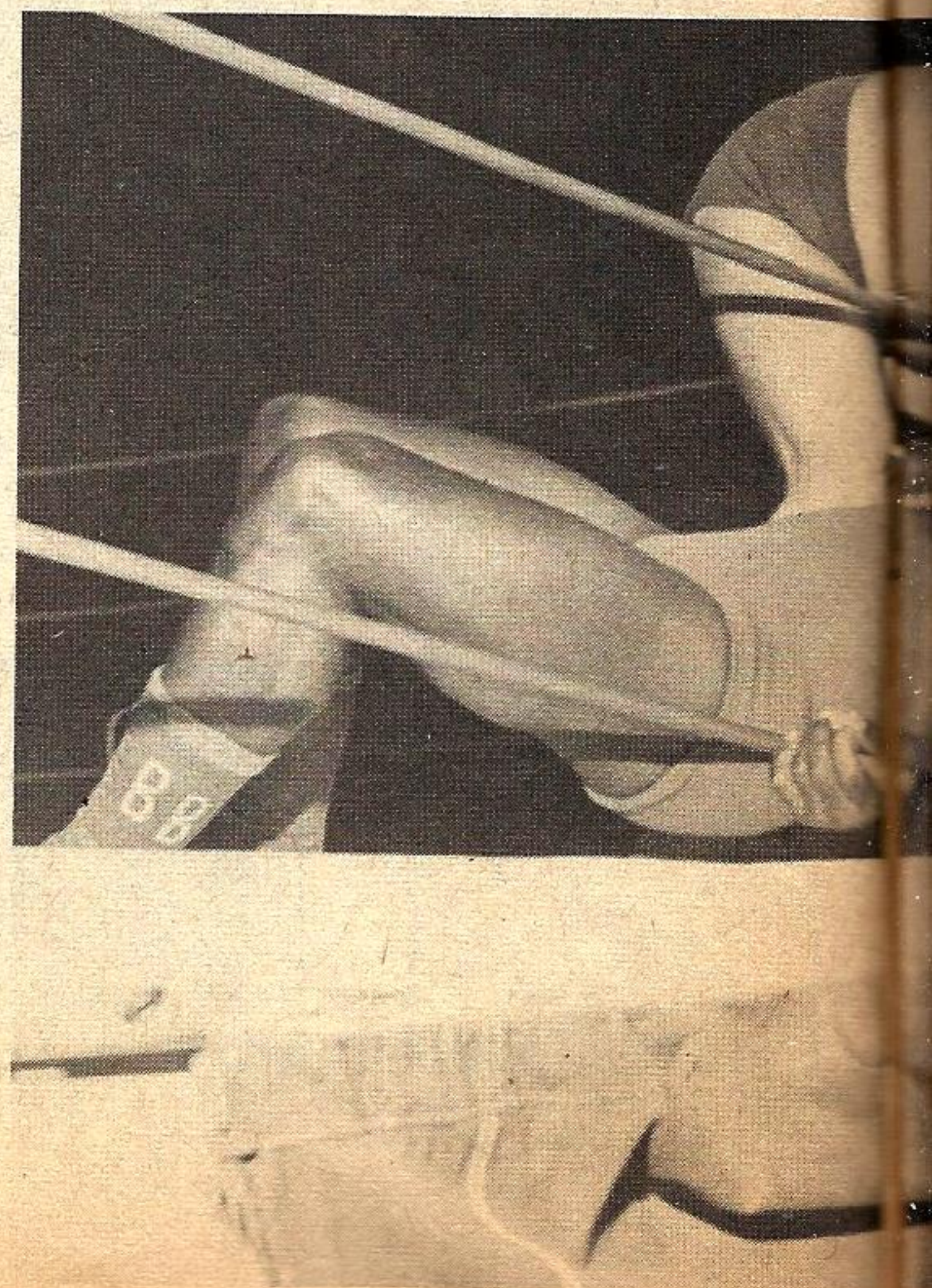
# OUTSTANDING P



Above: Even the most hardened fan was shocked when Sheik smashed a press table down on Pampero Firpo's head and body. The Argentinian was almost crushed to death by the onslaught. Below left: As if he were a toy doll, Terry Funk is hurled through the air by Rocky Johnson. Funk was no doll later in the match when his illegal tactics almost broke Johnson's neck! Below Right: It's a test of strength between Bruno Sammartino and Billy Graham, the blond superstar seemingly getting the best of wrestling's living legend. Moments later, Bruno would begin to rally.



Above: Like a jungle beast, Ernie Ladd bites at the flesh of Chavo Guerrero's forehead. Below: Brute Bernard uses the ring apron to choke Bobo Brazil in their wild battle held early in 1976.

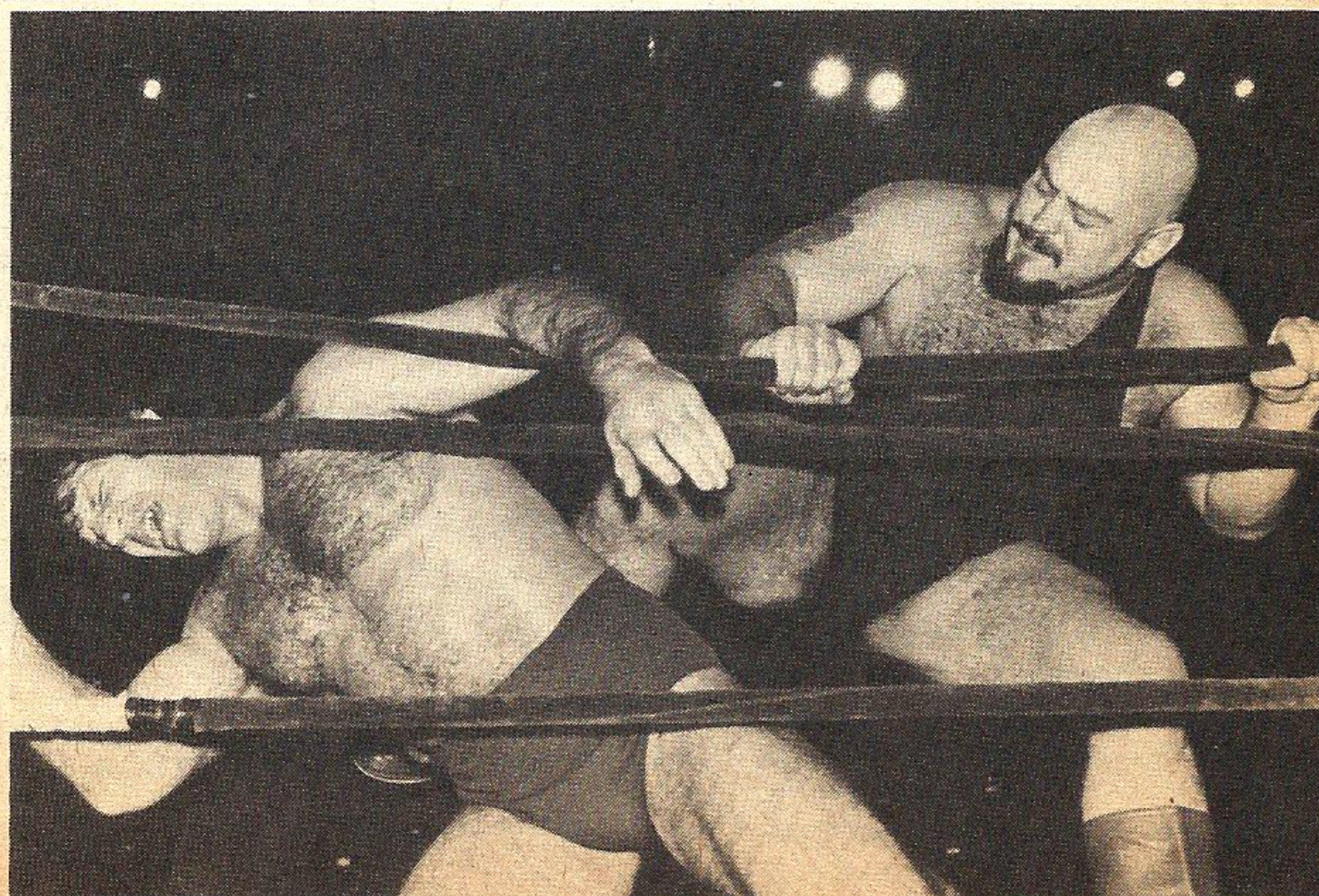
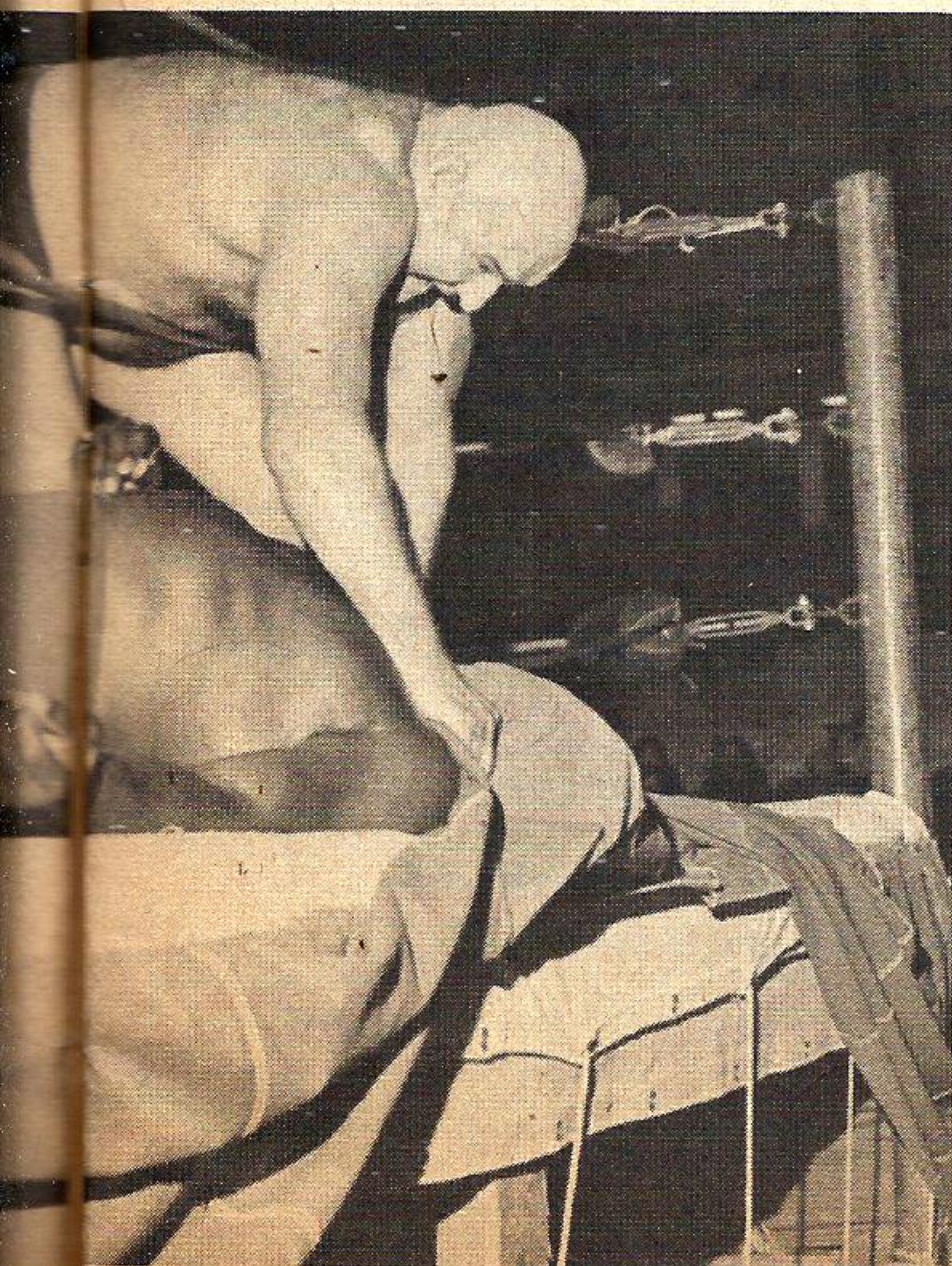




# PHOTOS OF 1976



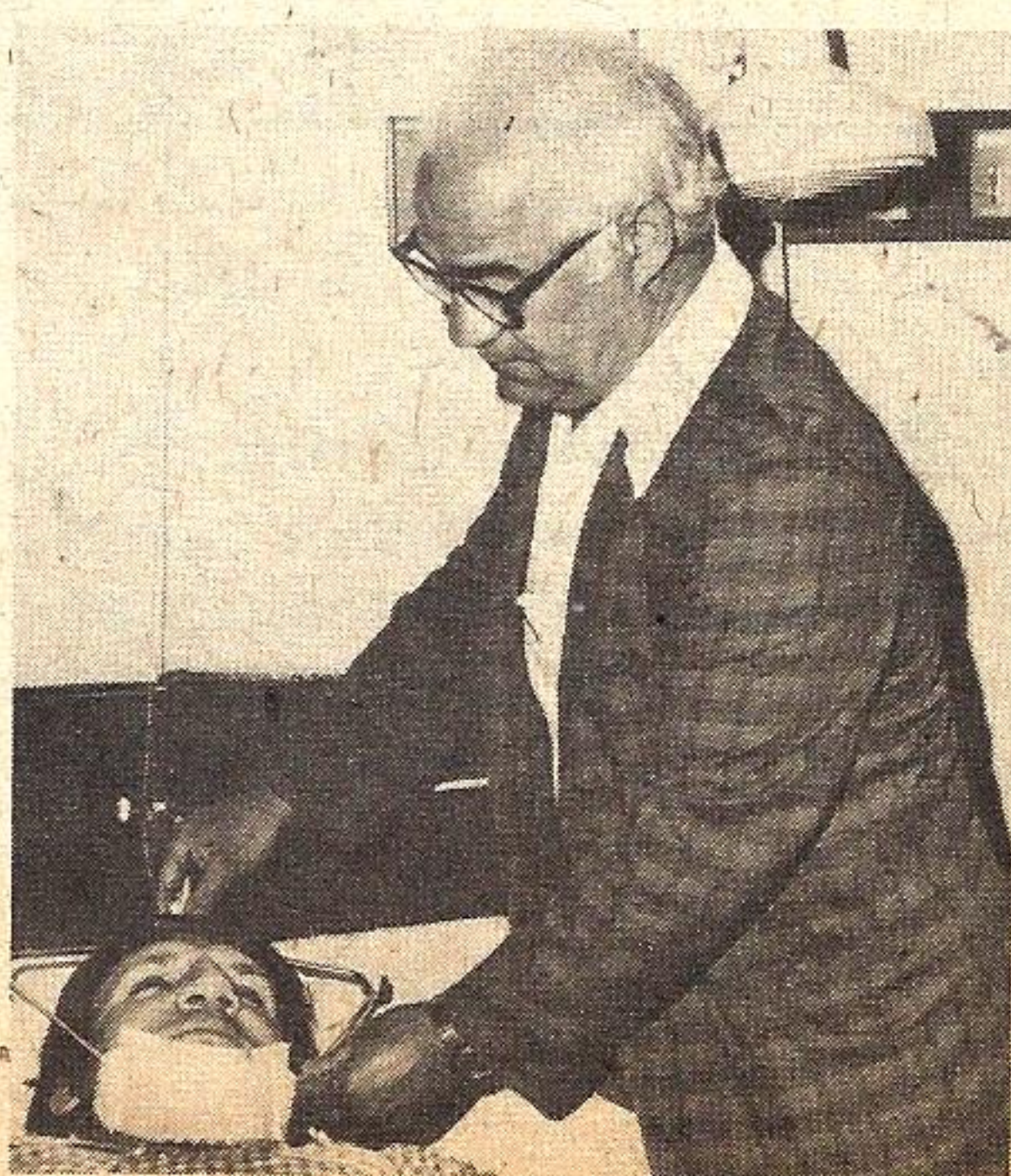
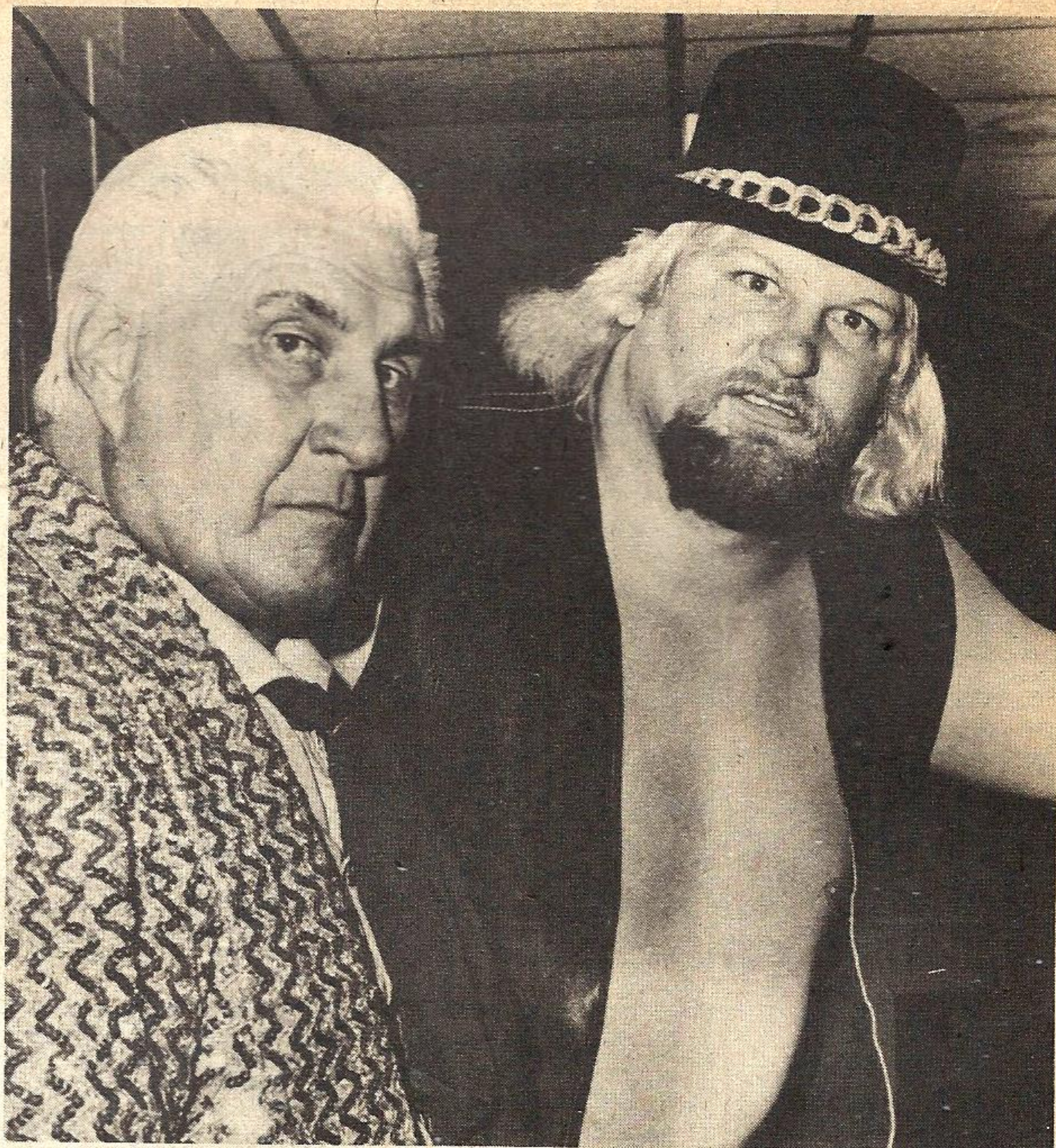
Above: It is war during the introduction when Jerry Brisco and Moondog Mayne go after each other. Mayne tried a sneak-attack only to find Brisco waiting for him with open arms and a will to brawl. It is not one of the blond grappler's more successful maneuvers! Below: A smashing kick to the ribs has Bruno Sammartino crumpling in agony. This is one of the many rough moments Sammartino had against Ivan Koloff this year.



(Continued on page 48)



# 1976 WRESTLING'S BICENTENNIAL REVOLUTION



**I**T WAS A year of confusion, fear and turmoil, a year of unknowns making it big. New champions, mysterious newcomers, and horrifying tragedy marked this year throughout. These were revolutionary times when the old order fell apart and new heroes were called upon to conquer unique tyrants. Only the unexpected was expected.

As the voting showed, the most striking event was the injury and recovery of Bruno Sammartino. Fans used to Bruno's invincibility had to contend with his crippling injury and the fear the WWWF champion's career had been ended. Stan Hansen and his "lariat," a smash to the head with a steel reinforced elbowpad, appeared to be destined for an unimpeded reign of terror.

First Bruno fell to him, suffering a cracked vertebrae, and then Ivan Putski had to be hospitalized. Fear swept through the WWWF and the entire wrestling community. When Bruno came back from his injury, the hopes and prayers of wrestling fans everywhere were with him. There was also great fear at his

*(Continued on page 20)*



# 1976

(Continued from Page 18)

return, for some believed Bruno came back too quickly from the injury and risked permanent disability.

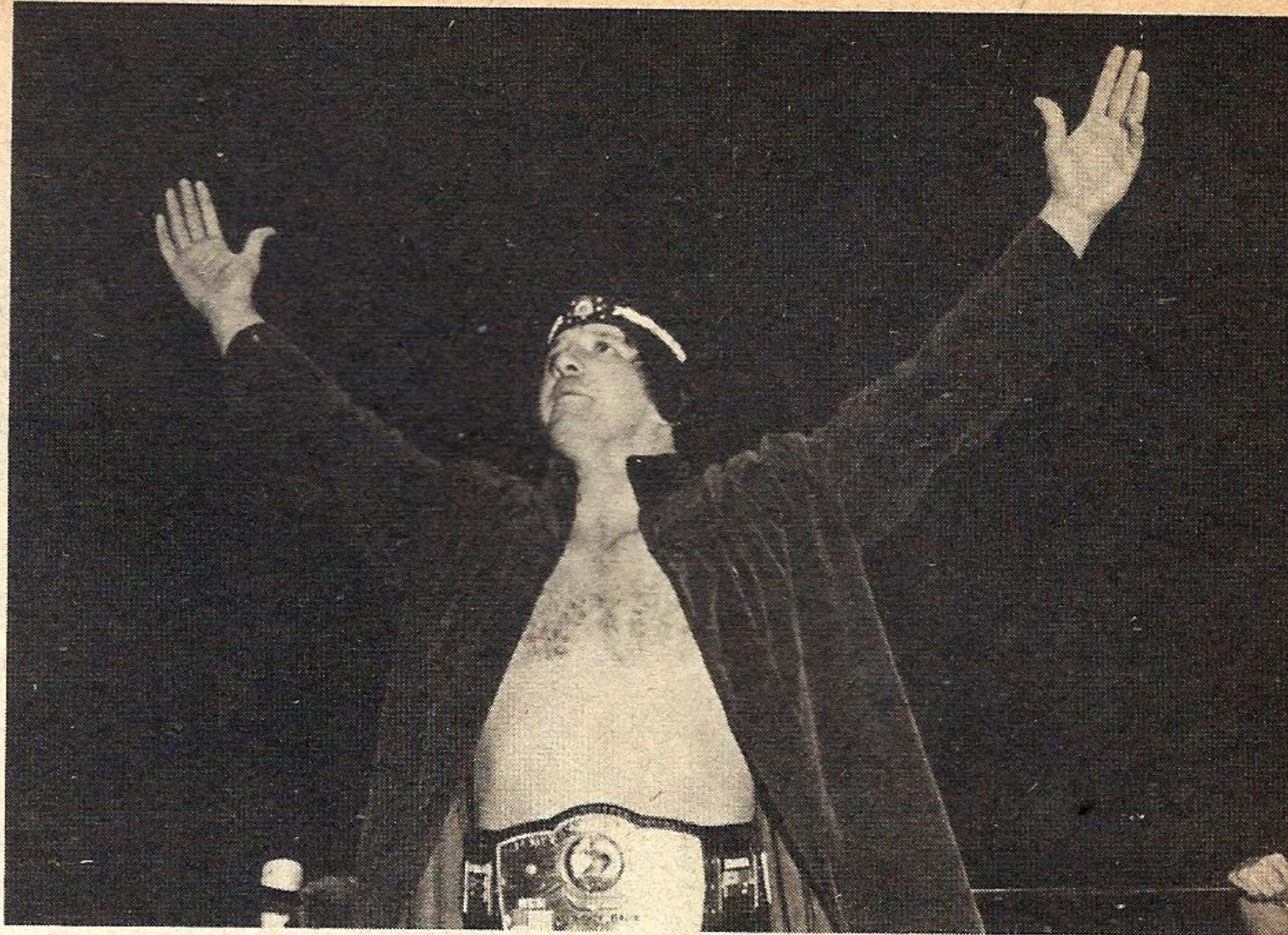
The crowd in New York's Shea Stadium saw Bruno come back gloriously. Stan Hansen never stood a prayer against the raging dynamo. It was a glorious victory for Sammartino and the human spirit.

Still, it was a brutally tough year for the champion and the WWWF as a whole. Bruno's championship reign, once thought indomitable, was repeatedly threatened. Some of the best scientific wrestlers, the WWWF's pride, were severely battered by ruthless rulebreakers. However, it was in the area of tag teams in which the federation suffered most.

The WWWF tag team champions, The Executioners, are masked marauders delighting in torture. They have used cunning, power, and cruelty to dominate the sport. There have been many challengers, many injuries, but no conquerors. It's been a tough adjustment for fans to accept these men as champions. The first masked champions in WWWF history will never be liked by the fans, nor by anyone who likes scientific wrestling.

The AWA and NWA have had to accept even greater shocks. After enjoying the dignified reigns of Verne Gagne and Jack Brisco, both associations have survived the first 12 months of a very different kind of champion. The AWA's Nick Bockwinkel has shown himself to be a cunning rulebreaker, holding onto his title with the illegal help of manager Bobby Heenan. After the superbly honest Verne Gagne, Bockwinkel is a slap in the face to wrestling. It has not been a joyous bicentennial for AWA fans and grapplers. They've done a lot of cheering in exciting matches, but there's been no celebration.

The NWA champion is Terry Funk, voted "Wrestler of the Year" for 1976. One can't be sure of Funk at any one time. He goes from berserk rulebreaker to scientific superstar with confounding ease. He's hated and loved, often by the same person! He's different from any



champion before him, a revolution in himself. The sport is awed by his victories and astounded at his statements. It's impossible to figure him out.

Much of the sport has suffered upheavals of one kind or another. There have been many injuries sustained by top grapplers, forcing some of them to be inactive for months. New names have cropped up with astonishing notoriety. It's become apparent that the superstars of wrestling are being threatened—and in some cases overtaken—by new athletes.

The most remarkable example of this is Bob Backlund, a rookie who managed to become Missouri state champion. This is an unheard of

accomplishment for a newcomer, a revolutionary event if ever there was one. It is also a warning to the established veterans not to take the youth lightly. These youngsters are announcing a new order for wrestling. These revolutionaries are demanding recognition or threatening turmoil. They are ambitious, skilled, and hungry. And they are being led by the accomplishments of Bob Backlund, the man named "Rookie of the Year" by the fans.

It's going to take years before one can analyze the many different occurrences of 1976. However, it doesn't take a seer to see effects of the year's events will be felt for many years to come. □



# The Executioners

EXECUTIONERS	42%
ANDERSON BROTHERS	20%
STRONGBOW & WHITE	
WOLF	11%
VALIANT BROTHERS	8%
OTHERS	19%



**F**ROM THE FIRST day of voting, there was no doubt which tag team would walk away with top honors. This year has certainly been the year of The Executioners.

The most mysterious tag team champions in WWWF history, Executioner #1 and #2 seemed to spring from nowhere and go straight to the title. Under the management of Lou Albano, this notorious duo used every dirty trick in the book to wreak havoc throughout the federation. Many tag teams tried to wrest the title from them, only to wind up battered and broken. Whoever

they are behind those masks, they are hated by everyone who respects wrestling's integrity.

The question of their identity has dominated the thoughts of fans all over the world. At least 100 wrestlers, top veterans, have been named as The Executioners. Albano's claim that they're rookies is laughed at by all knowledgeable observers. The Executioners must have been around for years learning illegal maneuvers. Though many top grapplers have tried to unmask the pair, so far it hasn't been done. Many people claim to

*(Continued on page 50)*

# TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR



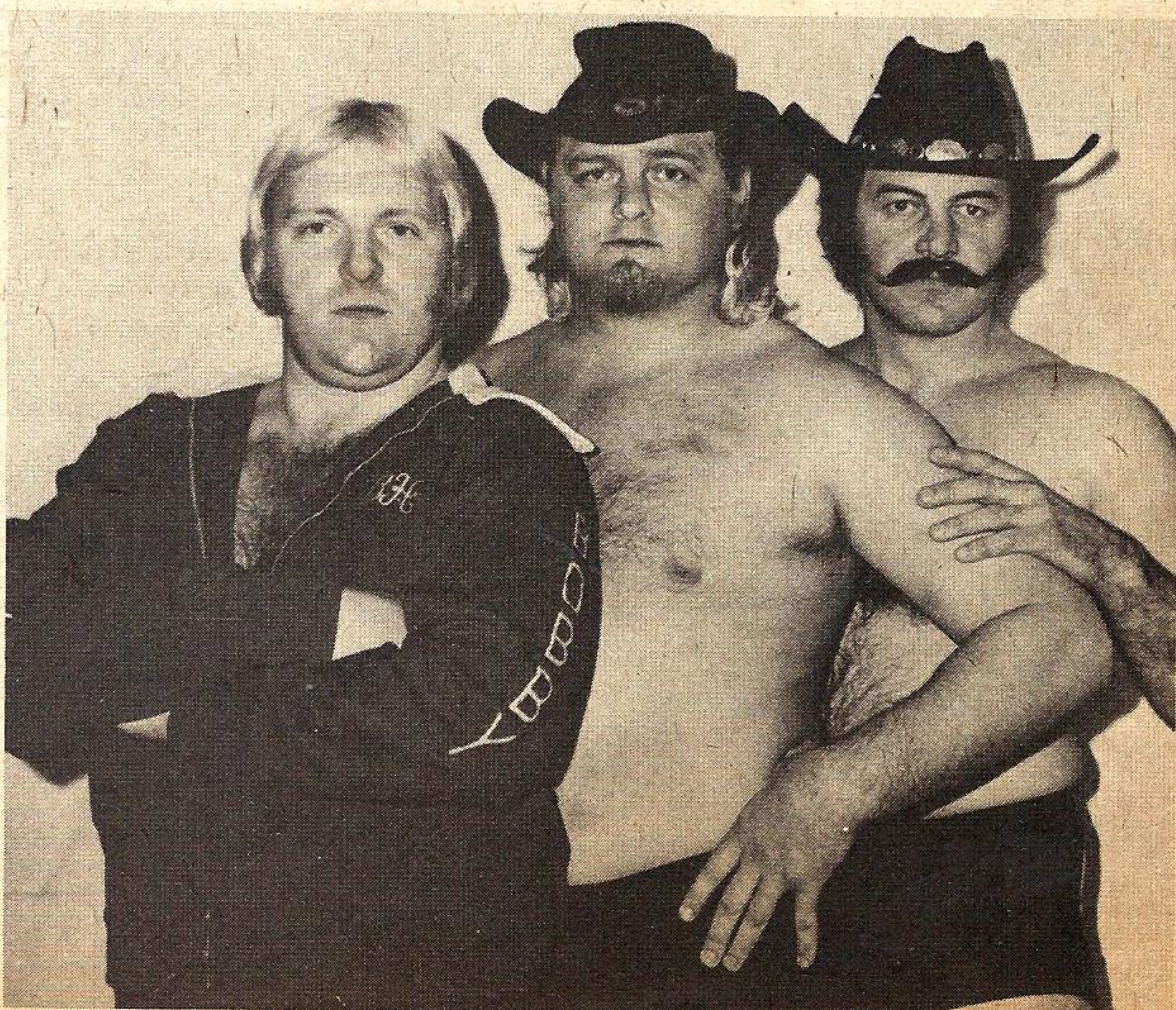
**W**HEN A MANAGER owns all the titles in an association, there can't be much doubt he's "Manager of the Year." It was no surprise Bobby Heenan was the overwhelming favorite, though "favorite" may be the wrong word to apply to this hated individual.

We have never seen so many angry comments attached to ballots as were directed at Heenan. They were enraged about his domination of both the single and tag team AWA titles. Heenan is also feared. His ambition knows no bounds. One wonders what he'll do next yet hopes never to learn.

"Heenan is a rat!" one fan, who wishes to remain anonymous, believes. "He's the lowest person in wrestling. All he does is interfere, get titles for his rulebreakers, and spit on the sport. I have to vote for him, but I hope next year to vote someone I can like. Maybe next year Heenan won't even be in the running!"

Most fans said things similar. Some were a bit stronger. Heenan has managed to infuriate everyone who's ever seen or read about him. His AWA champion, Nick Bockwinkle, manages to defeat every challenger who confronts him. Though there has been much written about antagonism between champion and manager, the two men still stay together and rule the AWA. As for the tag team title, Blackjack Lanza and Bobby Duncum terrorize AWA tag teams with ruthless cheating and savage brawls.

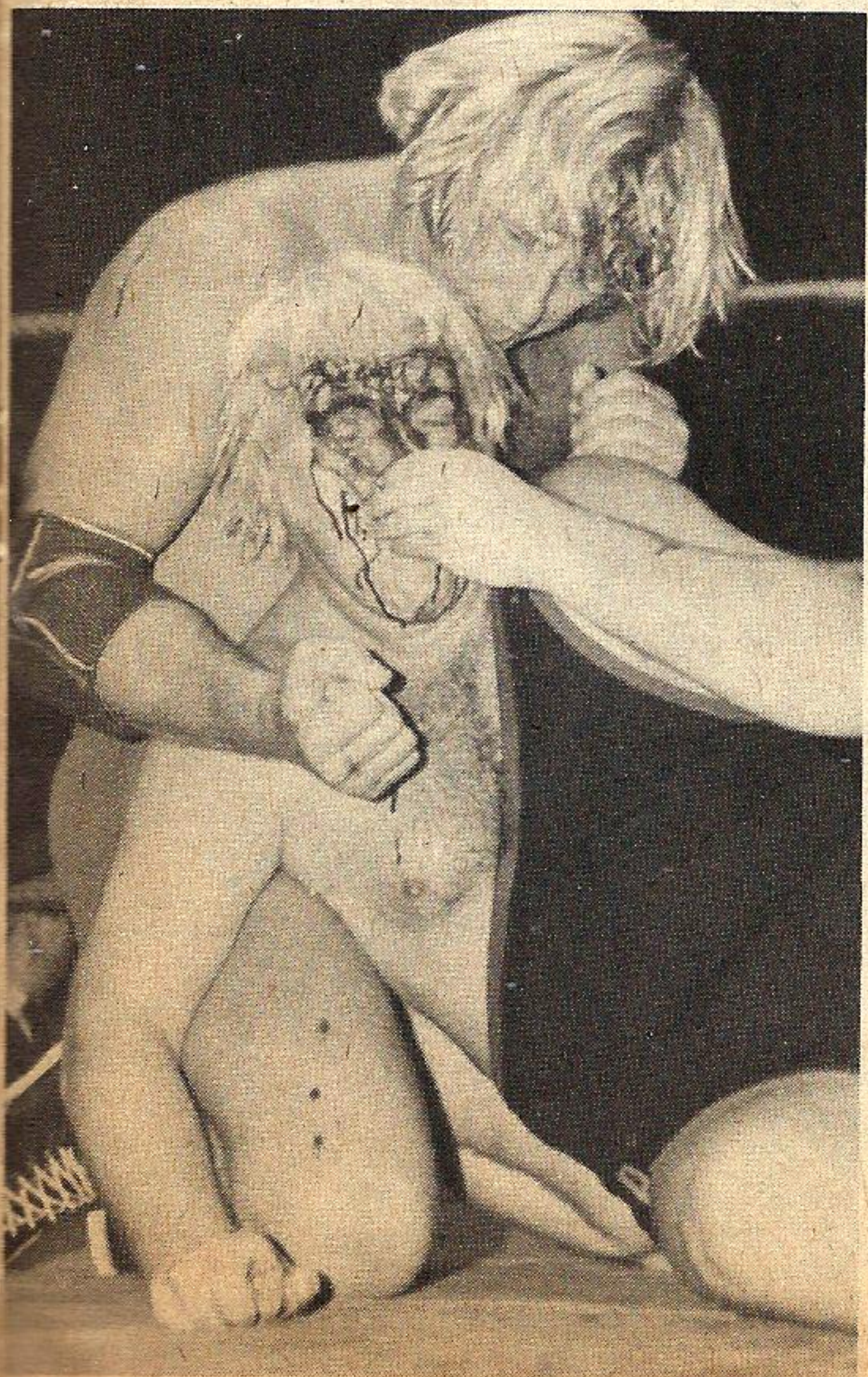
Of course, Heenan is not alone when it comes to owning a stable of cheaters. A man who is always prominent in the category, and in insults hurled at managers, is Lou Albano. This year, Albano won the undying hatred of fans for managing The Executioners, perhaps the most





# Bobby Heenan

BOBBY HEENAN	64%
LOU ALBANO	12%
FREDDIE BLASSIE	9%
GARY HART	6%
OTHERS	9%



despised duo in wrestling. Albano proclaims himself the guiding intelligence behind this pair, a claim guaranteed to infuriate anyone who loves wrestling.

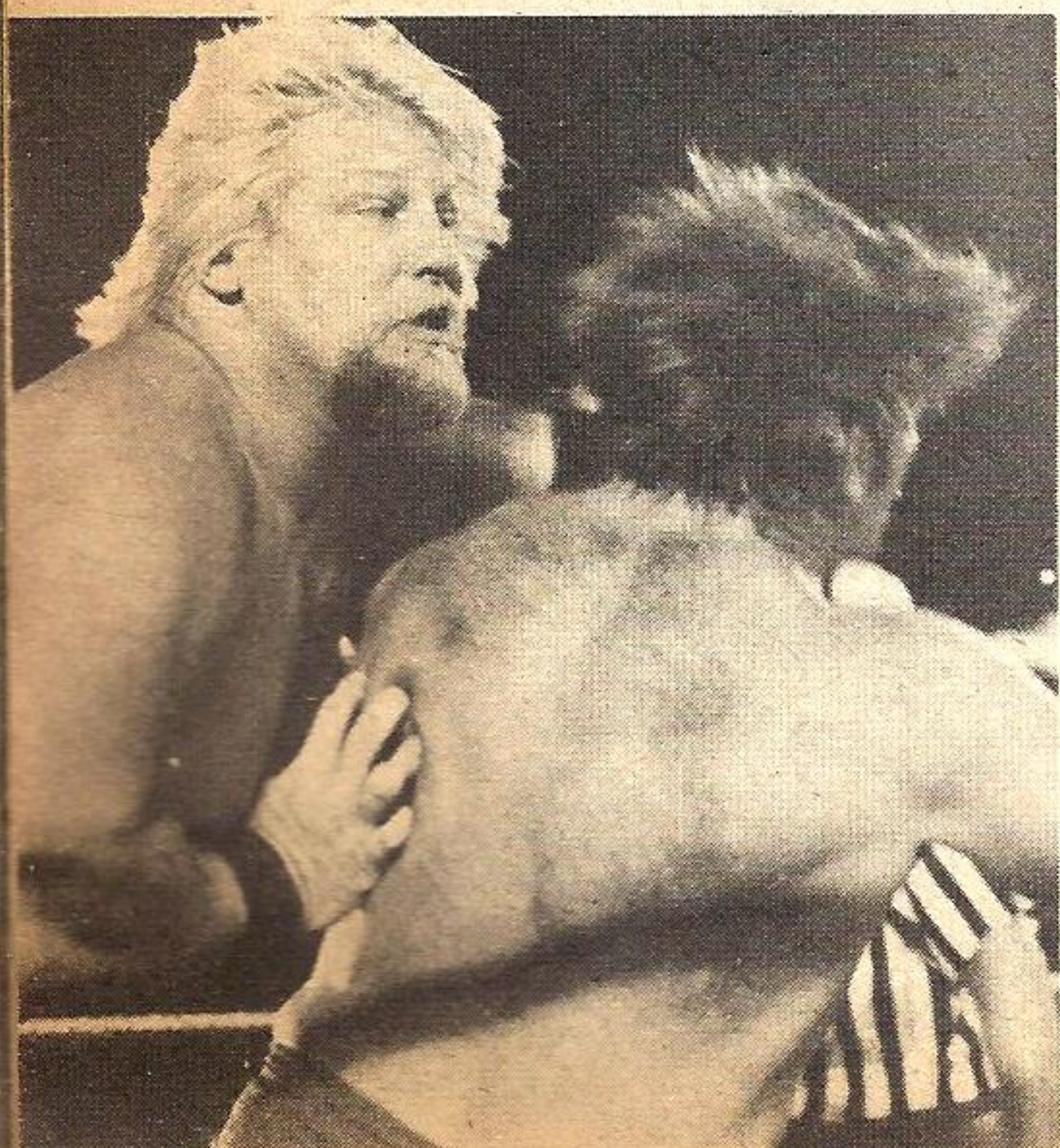
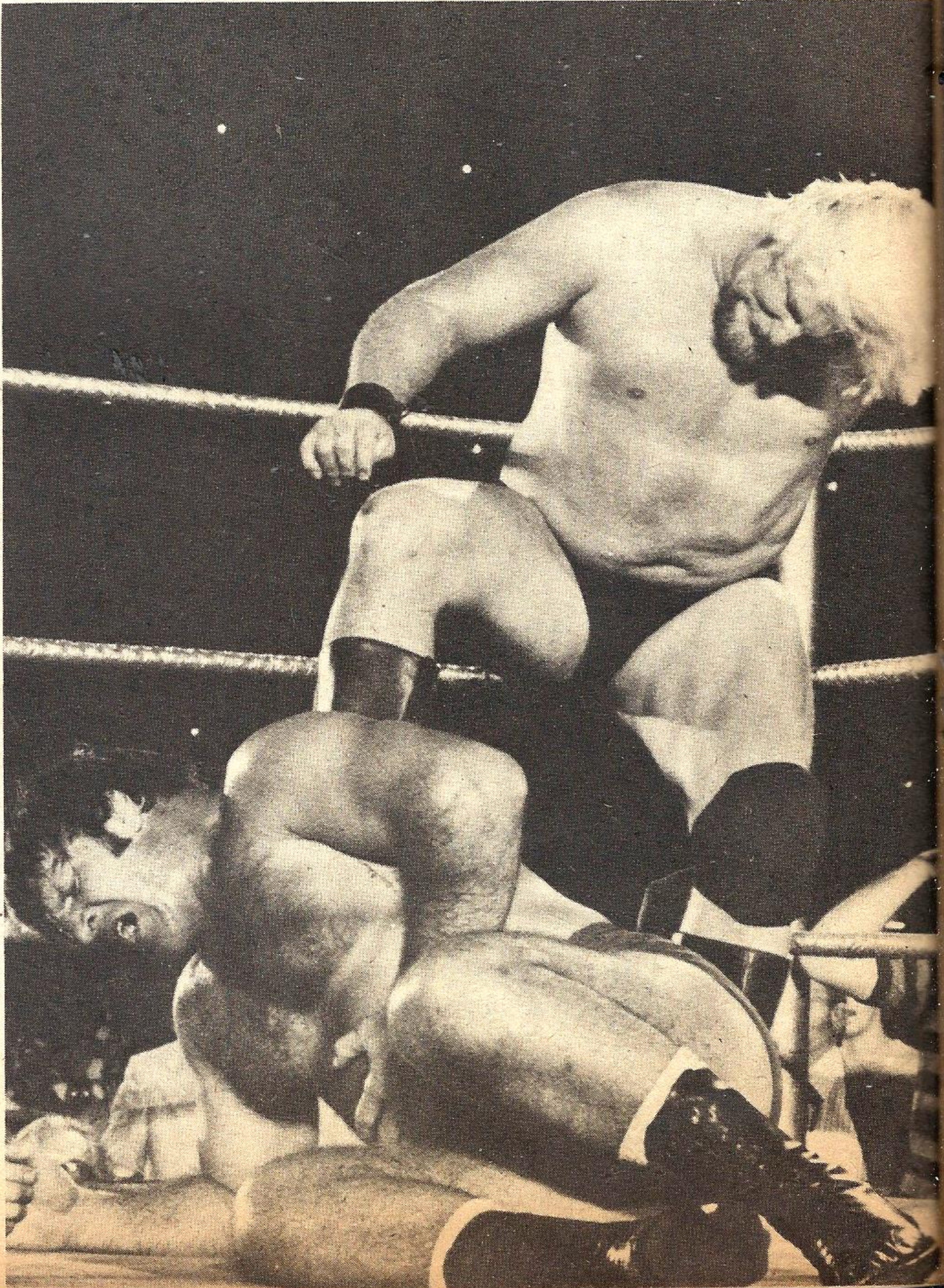
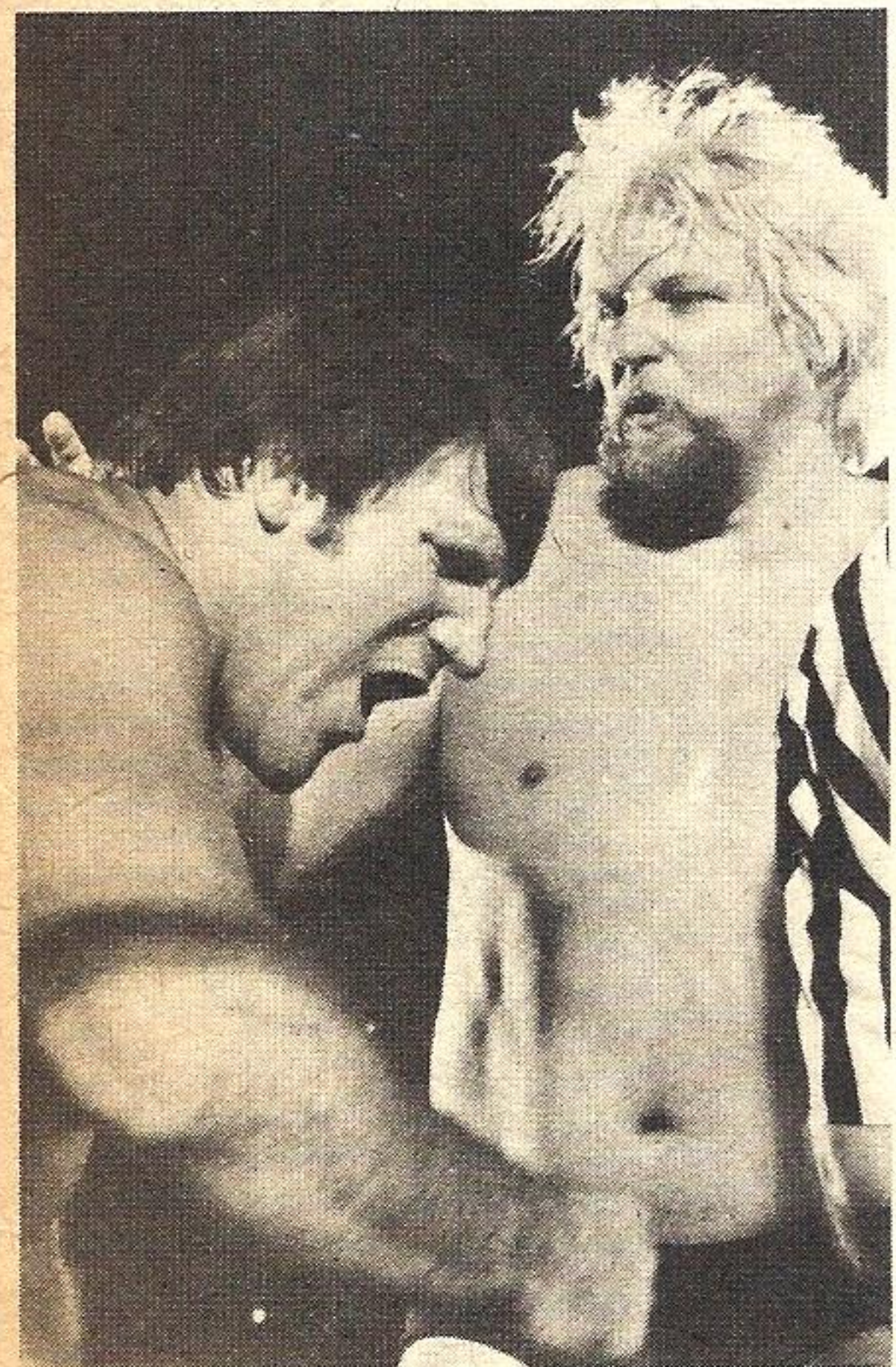
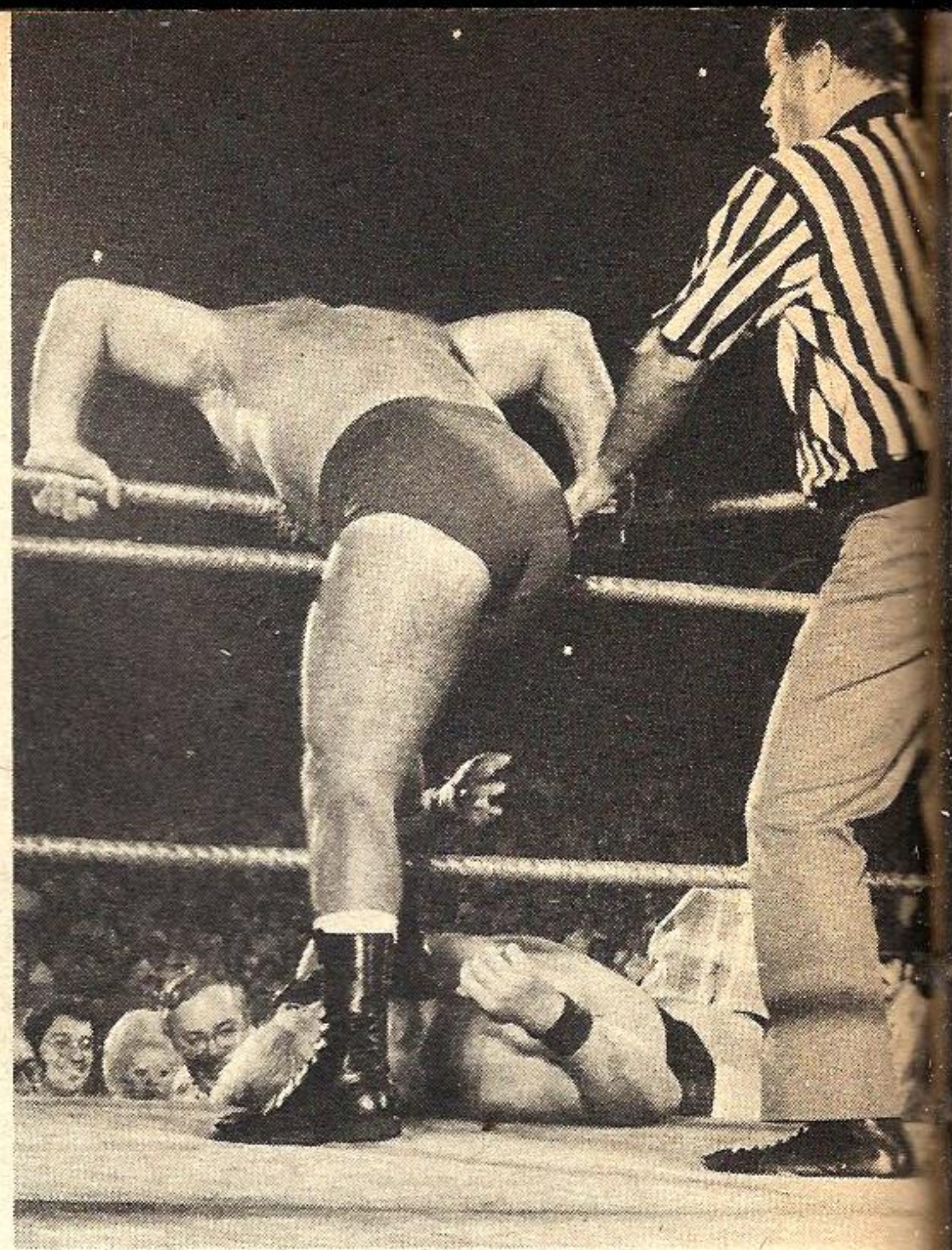
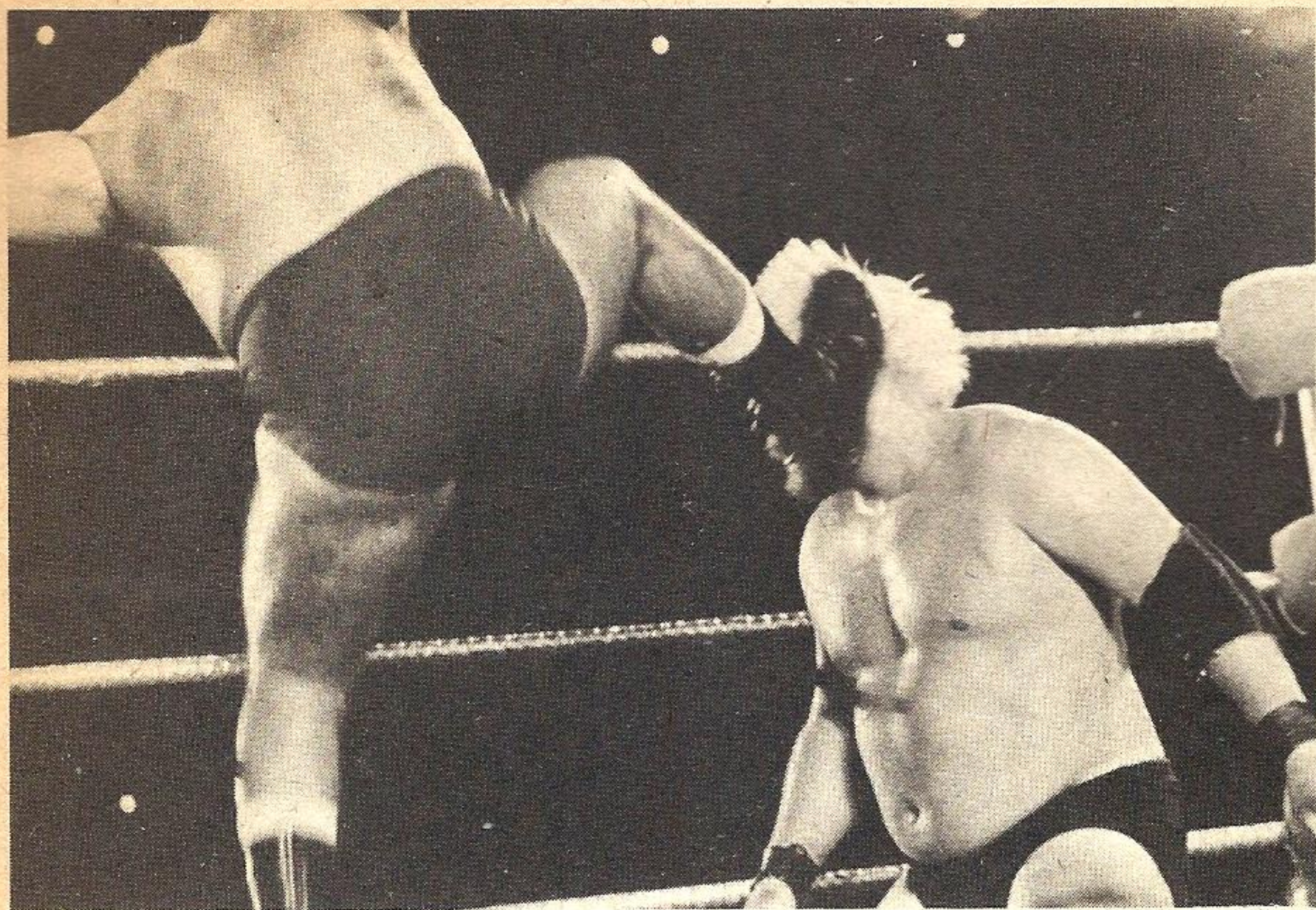
Freddie Blassie was responsible for Stan Hansen, which was responsible for fans voting for him with pens dipped in acid. No one has ever returned from the place most fans wished Blassie would go. Once again, the comments were best left out of a family magazine.

Gary Hart is a man in transition. His fourth position reflects this. Traveling from the southeast to Texas, Hart has seemingly abandoned his stable of rulebreakers and taken up with the respected Jose Lothario. No one is quite sure what Hart is planning. He's the

*(Continued on page 51)*

# MANNA OF THE YEAR







# Bruno Sammartino VS. Stan Hansen

SAMMARTINO VS. HANSEN	35%
FUNK VS. JOHNSON	26%
BOCKWINKLE VS. VON RASCHKE	11%
ANDRE VS. ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER	9%
OTHERS	19%

**F**OR MANY PEOPLE, there was only one match this year: Bruno Sammartino's conquest of Stan Hansen at Shea Stadium on June 25 1976. They believed it to be the most exciting, wondrous event in wrestling history.

"For as long as I live," Dave Schreiber, of Hartsdale, New York, wrote, "I'll be able to tell people I was at the greatest athletic event in history. I didn't really think Bruno would be able to come back from the back injury inflicted months earlier by Hansen and his 'lariat.' I was afraid to go to the bout, in fact, because seeing Bruno carried off on a stretcher would be more than I could take. However, a friend convinced me to go.

"In the opening moments of the match, I knew my fears were groundless. Bruno was magnificent, a whirlwind of wrestling fury. Hansen never stood a chance, nor did he deserve one. It was the greatest revenge I've ever seen. I cheered myself hoarse. I've seen Bruno many times. He was never better than on this night."

Many other fans agreed. They made this the top match of the year by a convincing plurality.

The second most popular match of 1976 took place between Terry Funk and Rocky Johnson. A superb exhibition that ended in controversy (many claiming Funk bribed the timekeeper to shorten the bout), this match had everything a top match should: action, courage, and determination.

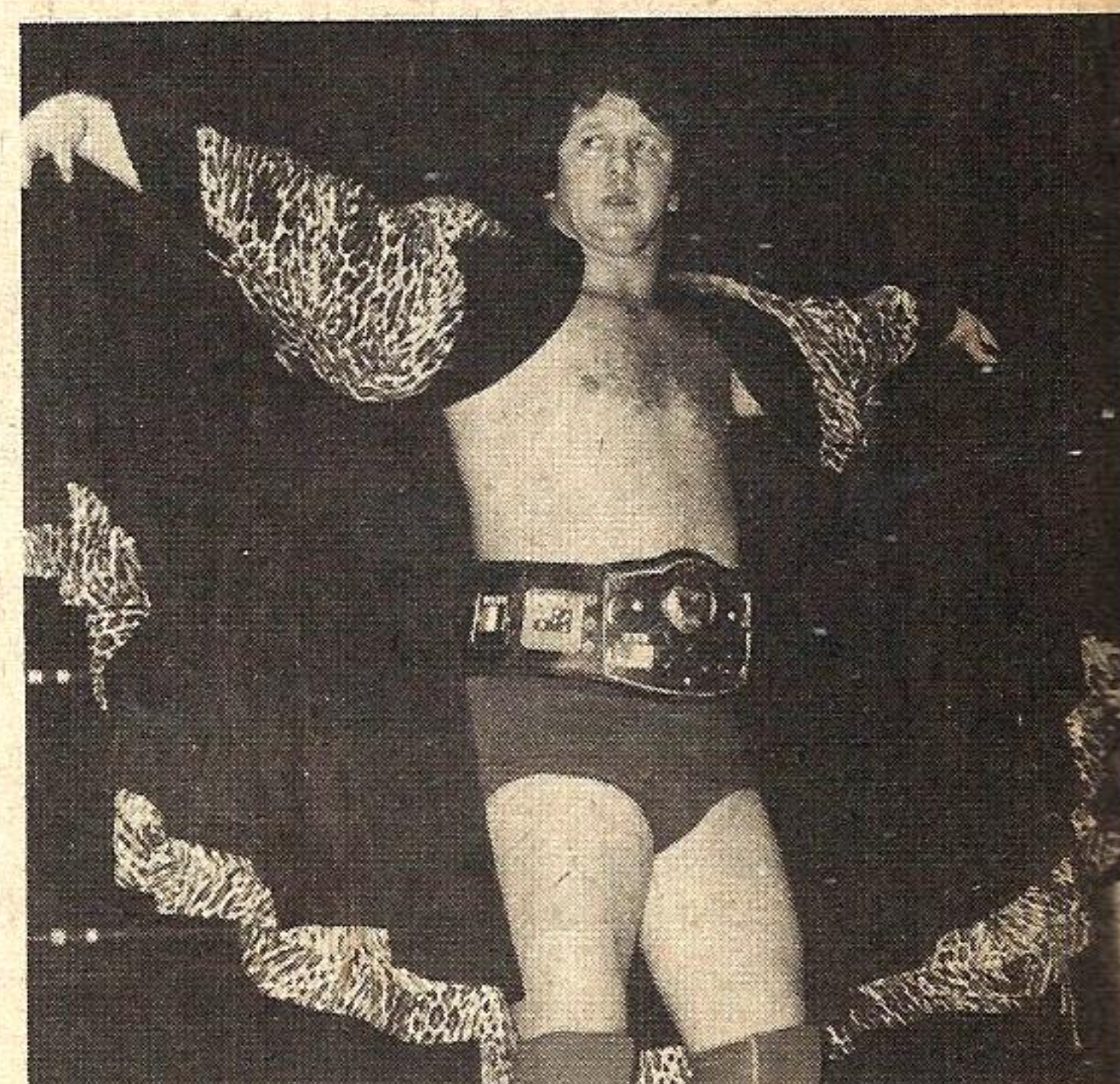
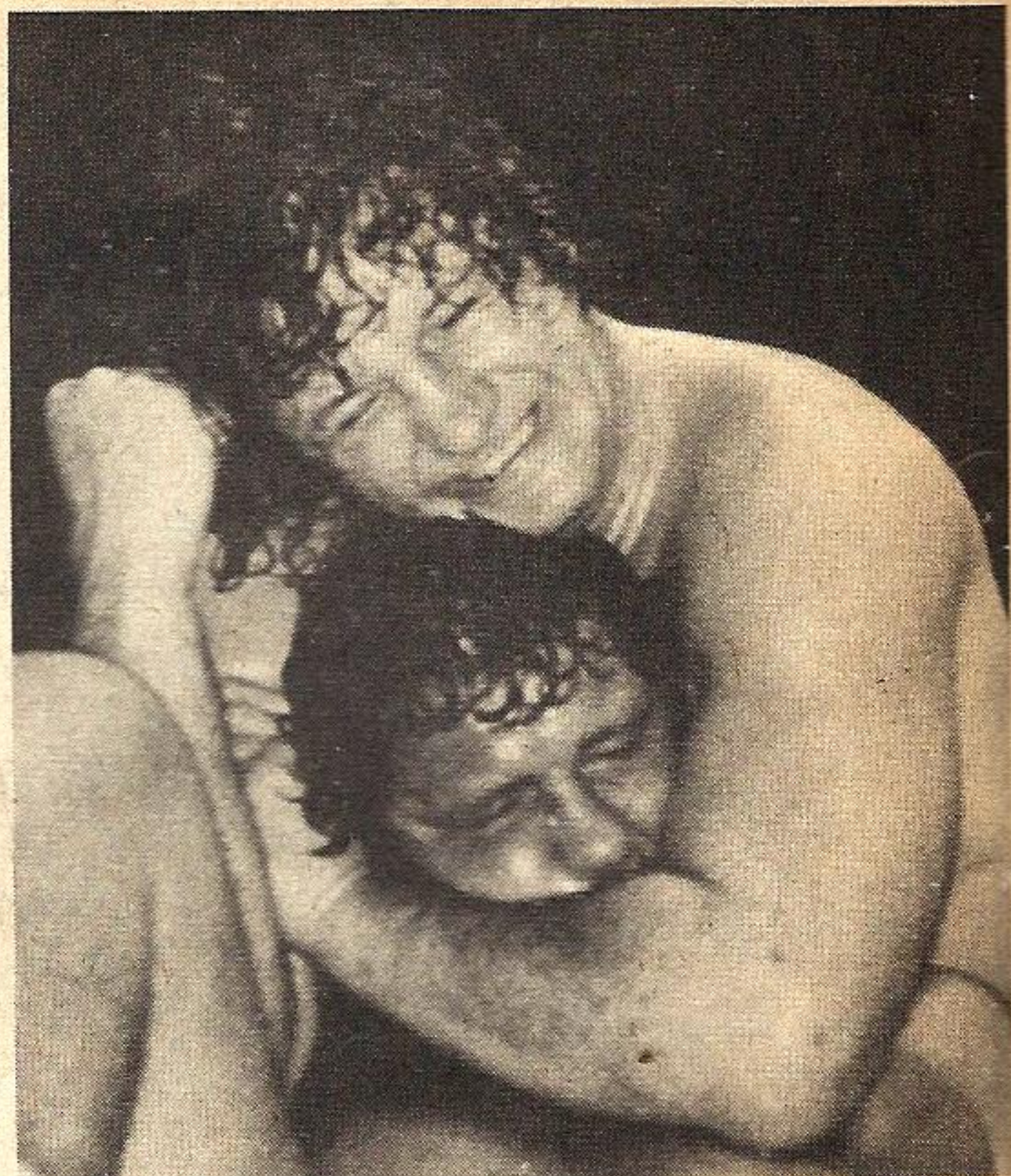
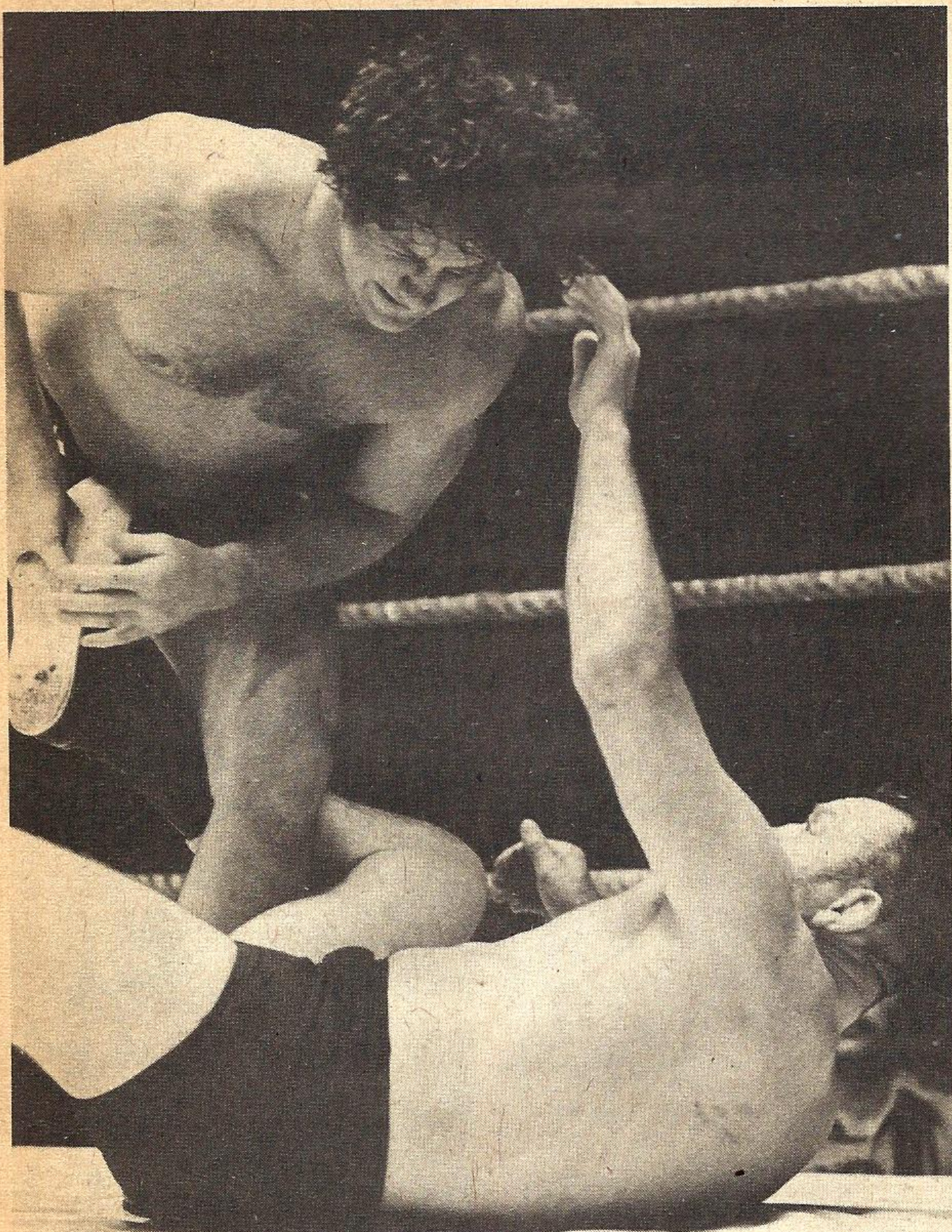
Funk's various title matches, in fact, accounted for 37% of the voting. It shows what an exciting champion Funk has become that nine different opponents were named with him for match of the year. That's a sign of widespread excellence and one Funk can point to with pride.

Nick Bockwinkle's AWA title defense against Baron Von Raschke also received a sizeable amount of votes. This brawl, pitting the two former friends against each other, may have the most telling effect on wrestling's future. Many believe Bockwinkle's manager, Bobby Heenan, set up the champion for a massacre. Nick has some real worries in that area himself. If Heenan and Bockwinkle are ever at each other's throats, this may be the match that started it all.

Many voters cast their ballot  
(Continued on page 52)

# MAJOR MATCHES OF THE YEAR

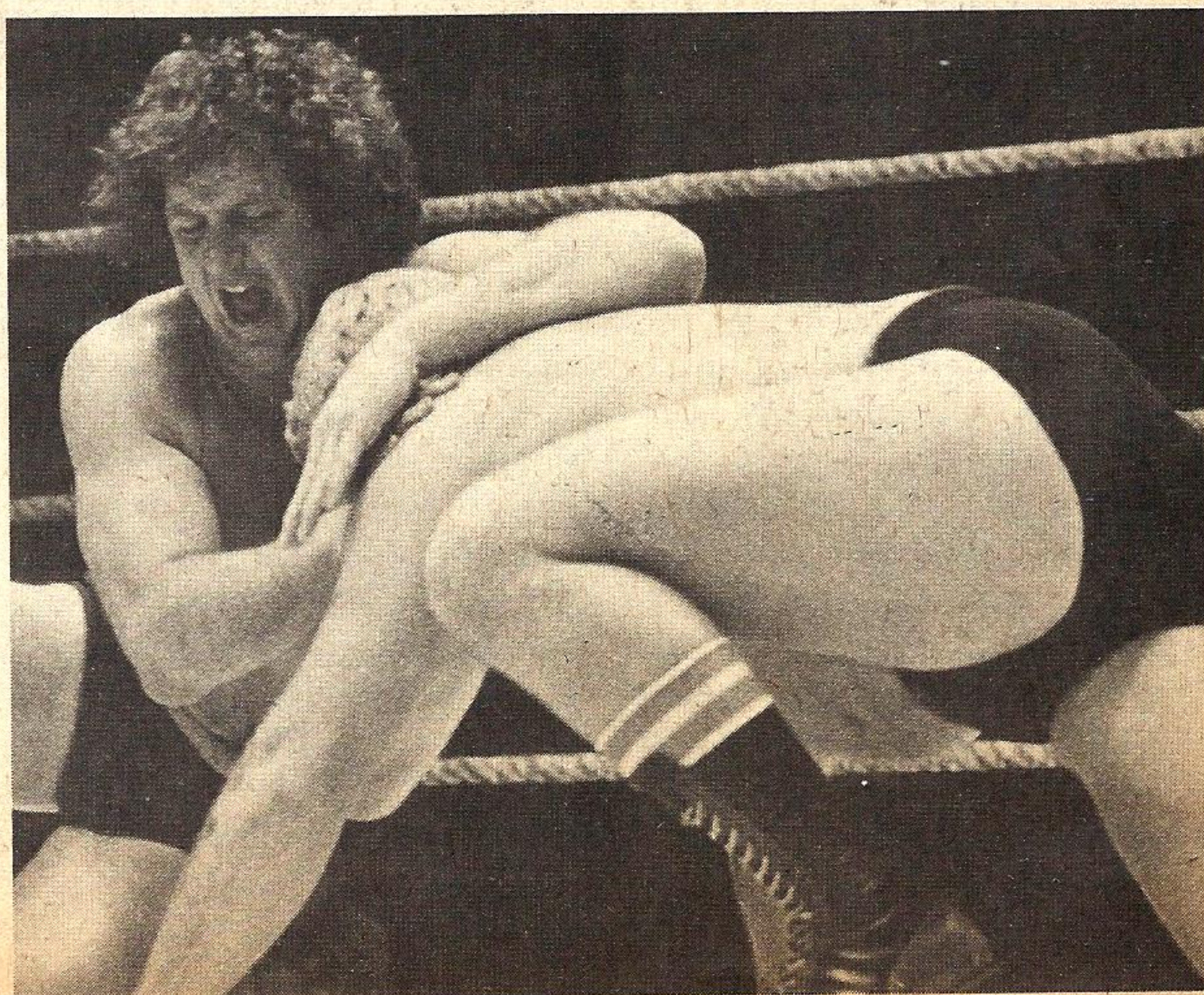




**T**HE MOST HONORED, prestigious award in wrestling is "Wrestler of the Year." This year it goes to a man considered by many to be the most controversial champion in history, Terry Funk.

No one in wrestling really knows Terry. No one can figure out what makes him tick. At times, one will dismiss him as a rulebreaker who holds on to a title through trickery and cruelty. Then Funk will take on an opponent using scientific tactics, executing maneuvers with a skill unequalled by any in the sport. He confounds critics while puzzling fans.

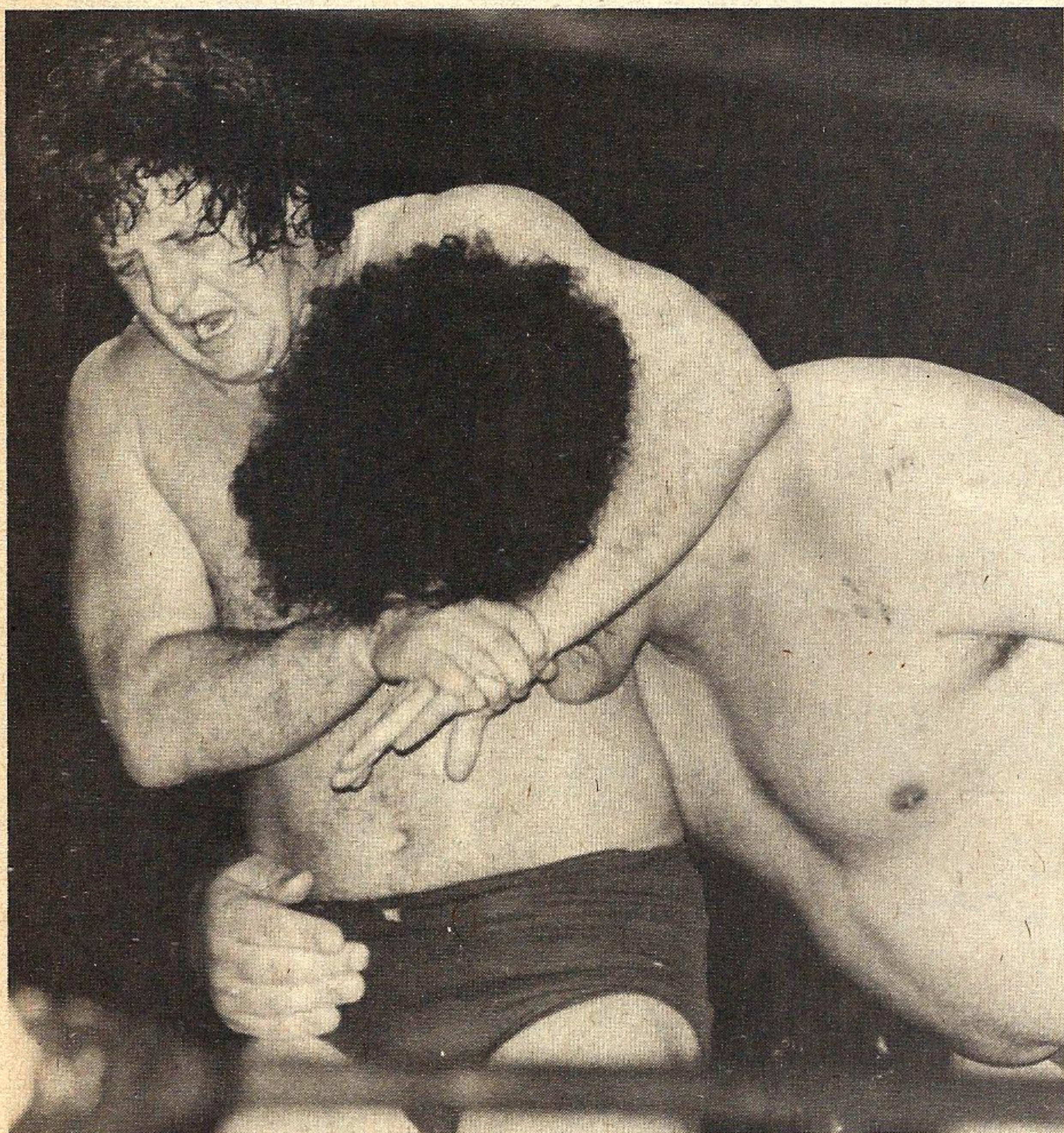
There is no doubting Terry's love of brawling. All his bouts





# Terry Funk

TERRY FUNK	24%
BRUNO SAMMARTINO	21%
NICK BOCKWINKLE	21%
PAUL JONES	18%
OTHERS	16%



are recklessly exciting. Owning the title may have calmed him down a little, but not much. He's still riotous when necessary, necessity being when Terry feels like it. Few wrestlers in history love a free-for-all like Terry does.

There was a virtual tie for second place between the AWA champion, Nick Bockwinkel, and WWF champion, Bruno Sammartino. Both men deserve recognition for their accomplishments over the past year, though for very different reasons. Bruno overcame injuries and conspiracies to restore honor to his title

and legend. Bockwinkel kept his title against top AWA challengers, but he employed the aid of his manager, Bobby Heenan. Nick's reign is the most controversial in AWA history.

In the South, no man is more respected than Paul Jones. He received many votes. Often, comments accompanying the ballots mentioned his integrity and courage, praising his skill and friendliness to the fans. If he can manage to take the mid-Atlantic title from Blackjack Mulligan in 1977, you can be

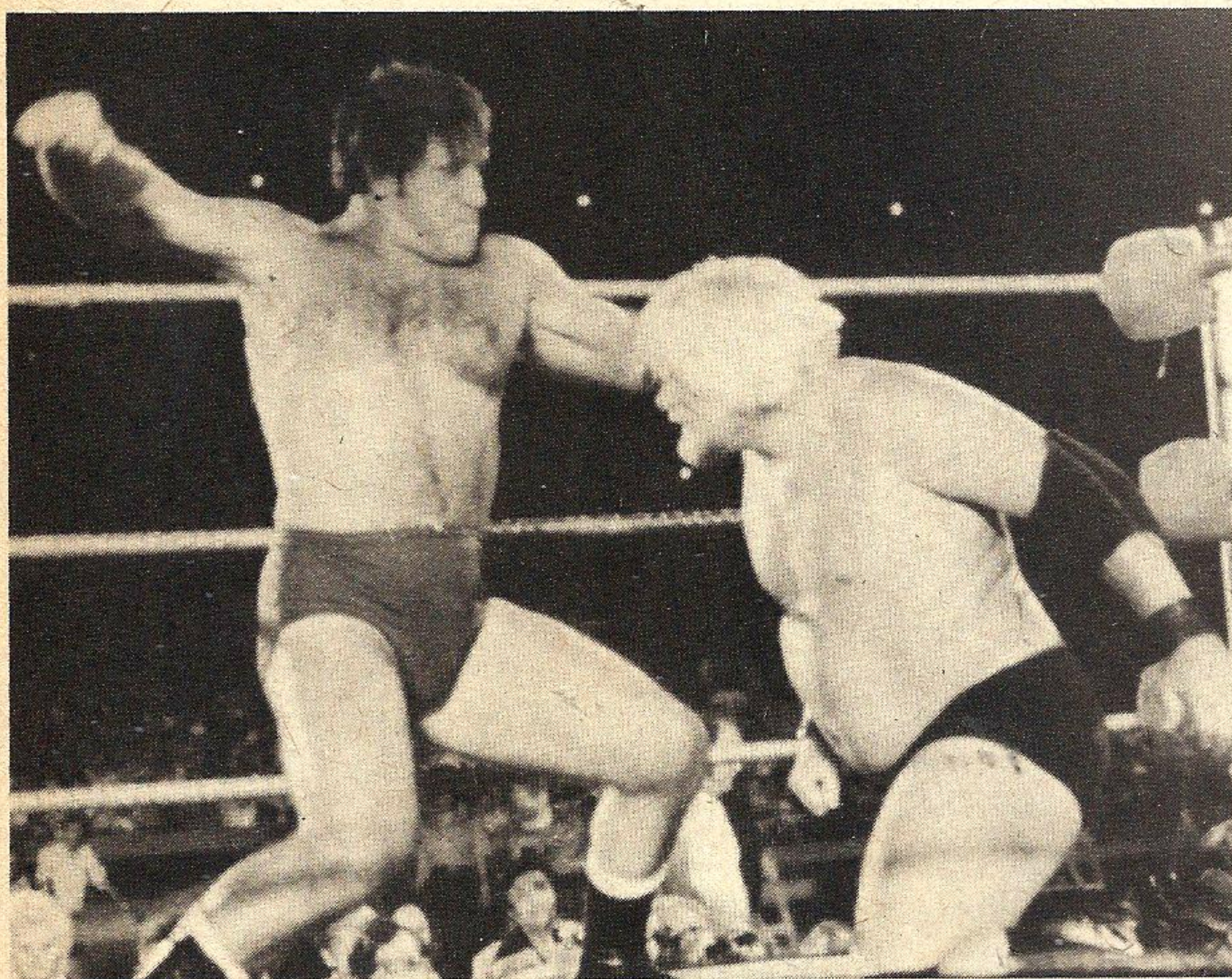
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# WRESTLER OF THE YEAR



# Bruno Sammartino

BRUNO SAMMARTINO	48%
WAHOO McDANIEL	29%
BOB ROOP	12%
BOB ARMSTRONG	7%
OTHERS	4%



**F**ROM THE VERY first hour we opened the ballots, it was clear Bruno Sammartino would be "Inspirational Wrestler of the Year." Only the amount by which he would win was in doubt.

There's no question as to why Bruno won the award. The vertebrae in his neck was cracked after being victimized by Stan Hansen's "lariat." Hospitalized, it was feared Sammartino's career was over. Only indomitable courage could turn tragedy into success. A few of the doctors despaired the situation was hopeless, even with all the courage in the world.

Yet, earlier than most people thought possible, Sammartino challenged Hansen to meet him in Shea Stadium. Fans were delighted Bruno had returned, but they were scared he was

rushing back before being ready. Even Sammartino might have been worried at his gamble.

Yet, from the first moment, Bruno exploded into a fury of wrestling brilliance. Better than anyone could imagine possible, he devastated Hansen from the opening moment. It's no wonder this classic confrontation was named "Match of the Year."

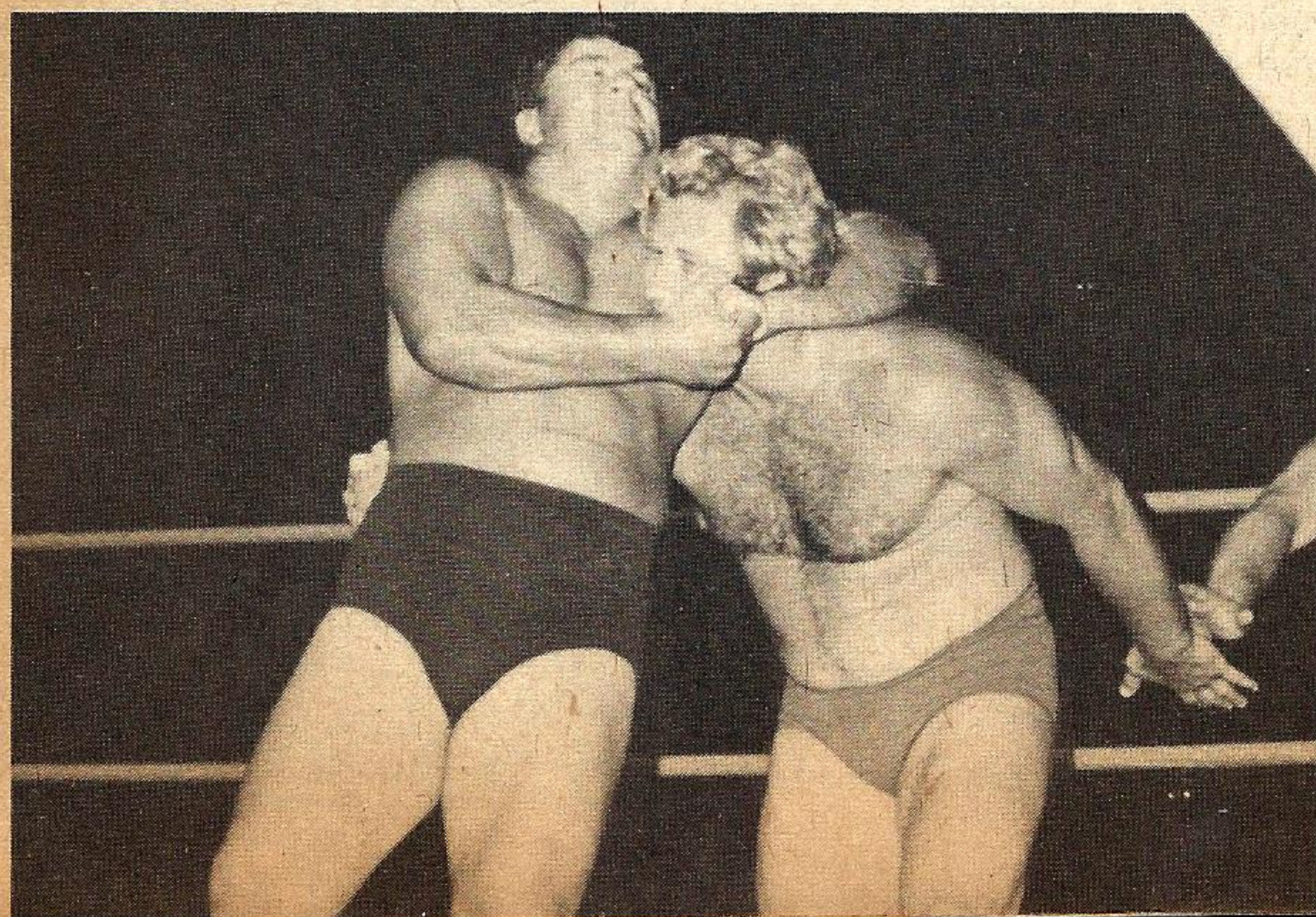
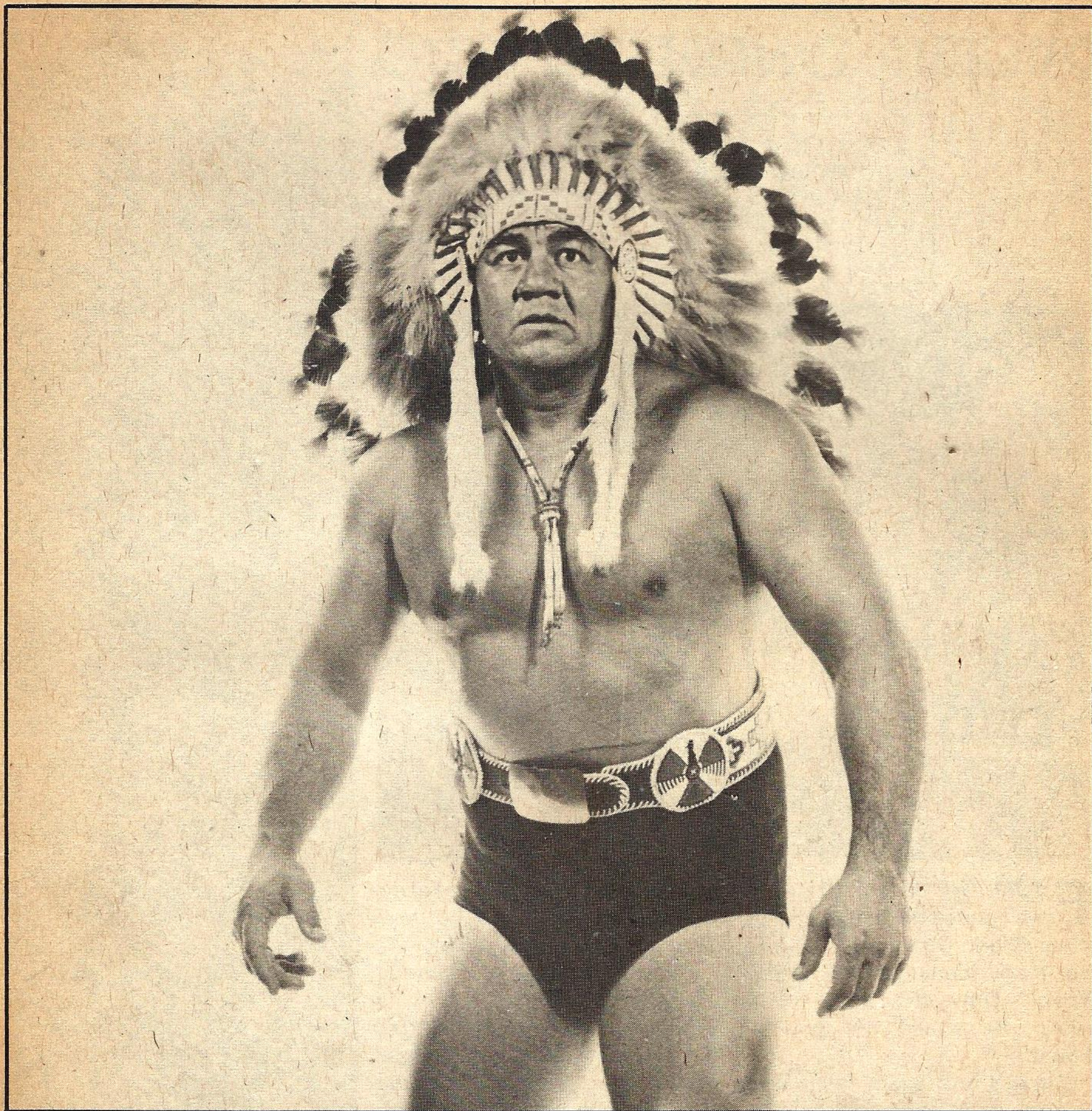
From crippled to undisputed champion in a few short weeks, Bruno Sammartino proved the power of the human spirit can conquer any injury. It's a lesson the world never tires of learning. Bruno's victory makes us all a little better human beings.

A man equally brave is Wahoo McDaniel. After being pounded by a press table wielded by Ric Flair, Wahoo was also taken to the hospital. Many believed his

*(Continued on page 56)*

# INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE YEAR





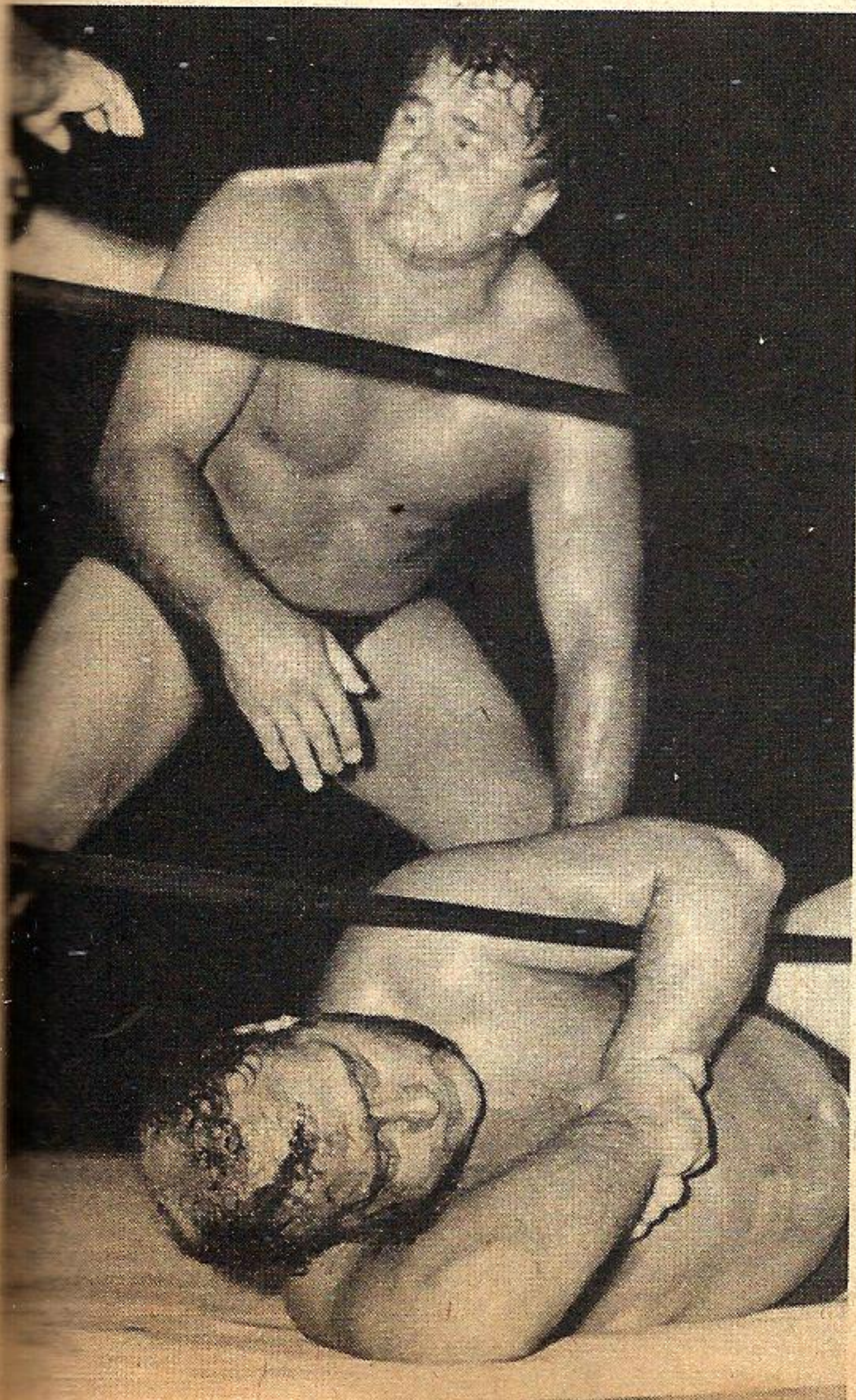
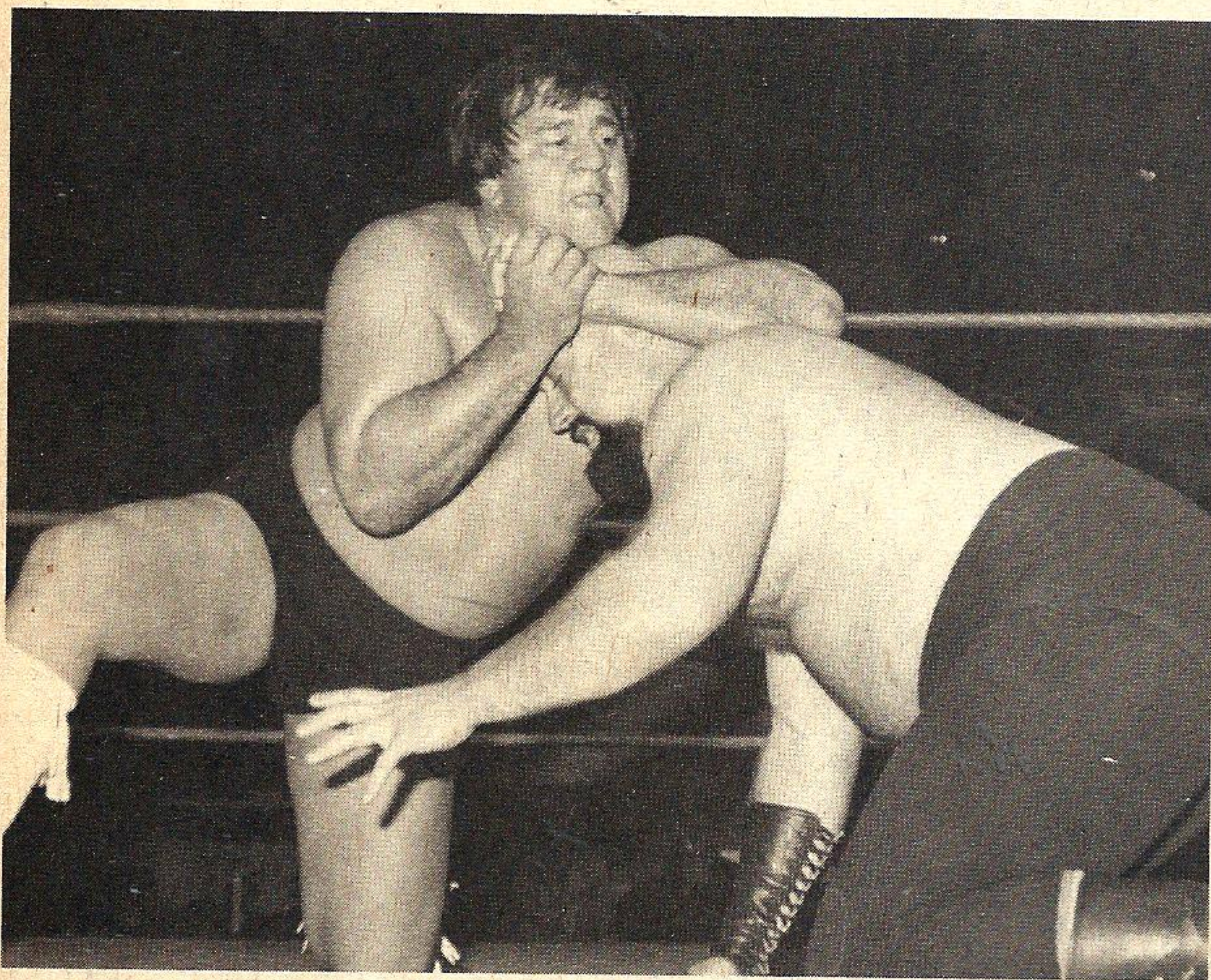
**T**HERE WERE MORE names submitted in this category than in any other. Many wrestlers are popular, beloved, and admired. Choosing one above all was difficult for most fans. The wide variety of names underlines this.

The winner by a surprising majority for such a small percentage of votes is Wahoo McDaniel, a man whose popularity has been great for year. It's been a hectic year for Wahoo, pounding away in grudge matches and being



# Wahoo McDaniel

WAHOO McDANIEL	18%
CHIEF JAY STRONGBOW	14%
MR WRESTLING II	12%
IVAN PUTSKI	11%
OTHERS	45%



hospitalized by Ric Flair. Some thought his career was over after that injury. This award is the fans' way of saying, "Welcome back!"

McDaniel has had a long and honorable career in athletics. Wahoo gave up football stardom for an opportunity to become a professional wrestler. From the beginning, he captured the admiration of fans wherever he wrestled. Chief Wahoo McDaniel's headdress and Indian garb are welcome sights in any arena. His Indian heritage, proudly proclaimed, makes his every match a demand for his people's dignity. McDaniel is an extraordinary human being as well as a great wrestler.

Interestingly enough, Indians made the top two in popularity.

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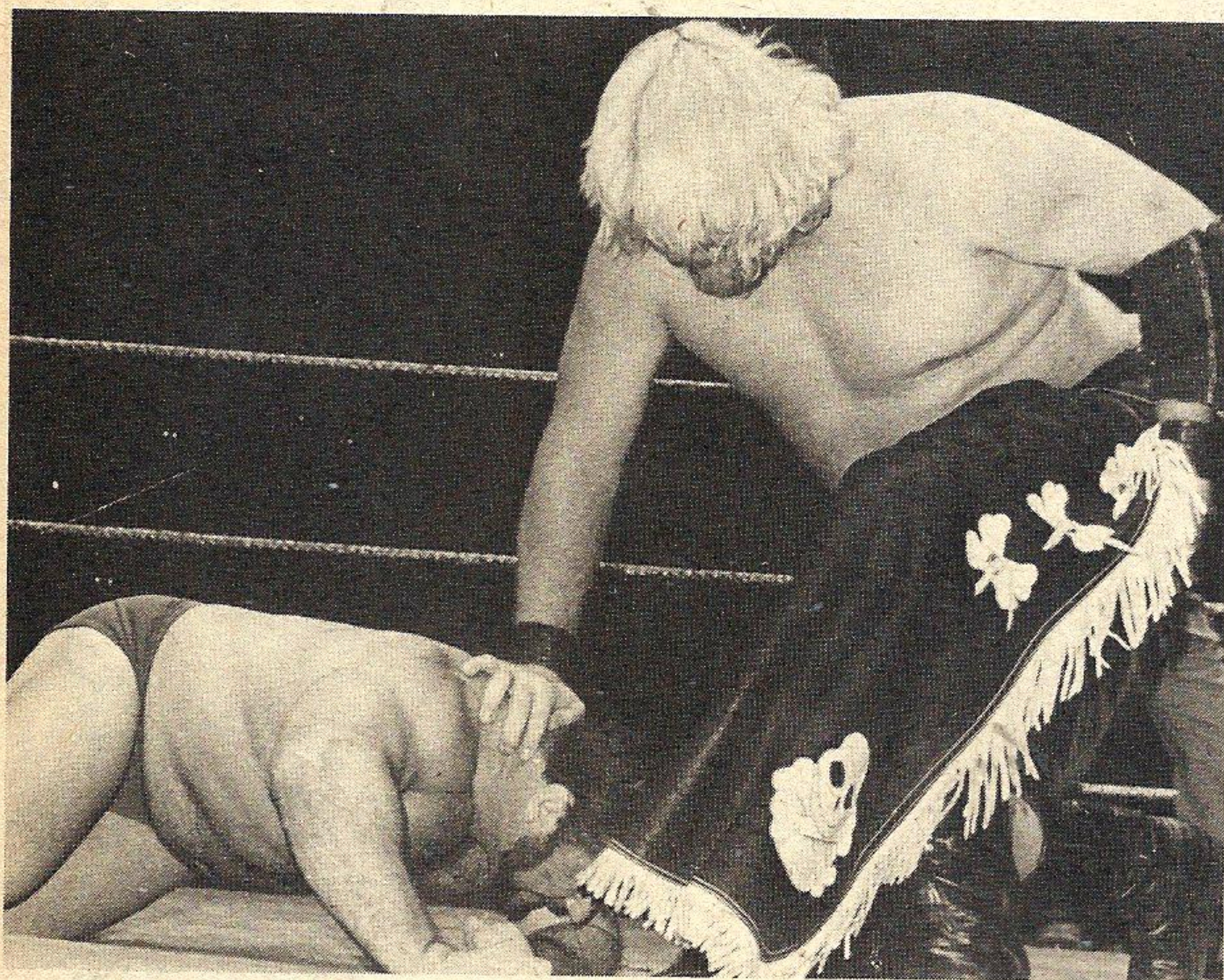
# MOST POPULAR

## WRESTLER OF THE YEAR



# Stan Hansen

STAN HANSEN	19%
OX BAKER	17%
TERRY FUNK	12%
SPOILER	9%
OTHERS	43%



**W**ITH SO MANY to choose from, it is no wonder the voting for "Villain of the Year" was so widespread and varied. The winner, Stan Hansen, received less than 20 percent of the vote.

Hansen easily won when it came to fans' comments: those directed at him were the most hateful we've ever seen. All hoped Hansen would wind up lying in a hospital bed, the punishment Stan inflicted on Bruno Sammartino.

"If the commissions won't ban Hansen," Katherine Roberts, of Plainville, Vt., wrote, "then I hope some wrestler cripples him for good. He's a blight on wrestling, destroying the noble athletes. What he did to Bruno Sammartino, illegally, is enough for me to know he's the worst around. Damn his soul to fiery

hell!"

Most of the ballots on Hansen came with similar comments, some unfit for this magazine. Not only for breaking Sammartino's neck is Hansen criticized. His many tactics against other men earned the outrage. However, almost everyone agreed not only Hansen should be banned, but also the lariat, Hansen's crippling move. While everything about Stan is despised, the lariat makes fans uncontrollably furious. If the fans have their way, Hansen will never be able to wear an elbowpad into an arena again.

When Hansen heard of his being named "Villain of the Year," he laughed for five minutes.

"It's just like the cretins,"

(Continued on page 60)

# VILLAIN OF THE YEAR



# Bob Backlund

BOB BACKLUND	35%
CHAVO GUERRERO	34%
STEVE KEIRN	13%
JOHNNY RIVERA	5%
OTHERS	13%



**T**HE FUTURE IS bright for professional wrestling if two rookies like Bob Backlund and Chavo Guerrero appear in the same year. If the voting had gone on another couple of days, it could have gone the other way. But when the voting finally closed, Bob Backlund was declared "Rookie of the Year."

Backlund certainly deserves to be honored for his great rookie year. His unprecedented title victory over Harley Race to capture the Missouri belt electrified the wrestling community. His defenses of the belt were astonishing for one so young. Though still rough around the edges, Backlund is quickly developing a style which is becoming second nature to him. And the style is exceptional!

There appears to be no limit to

Backlund's potential. He can adapt to his opponents' styles brilliantly, enabling him to counter as well as attack. Most remarkable is his poise. Even in danger, he never panics. As with all great wrestlers, Backlund can continue to be effective despite incredible pain. He's not a man to run when the chips are down.

The race was close because Chavo Guerrero is also worthy of this honor. In any other year, he would have been a shoo-in. In fact, when Backlund was told of his winning the honor, the first thing that came to his mind is that he defeated Chavo.

"More people voted for me than Guerrero!" Backlund exclaimed in wonder. "I can't believe it. I thought Chavo would be the easy victor. I've always dreamed of winning this award

*(Continued on page 62)*

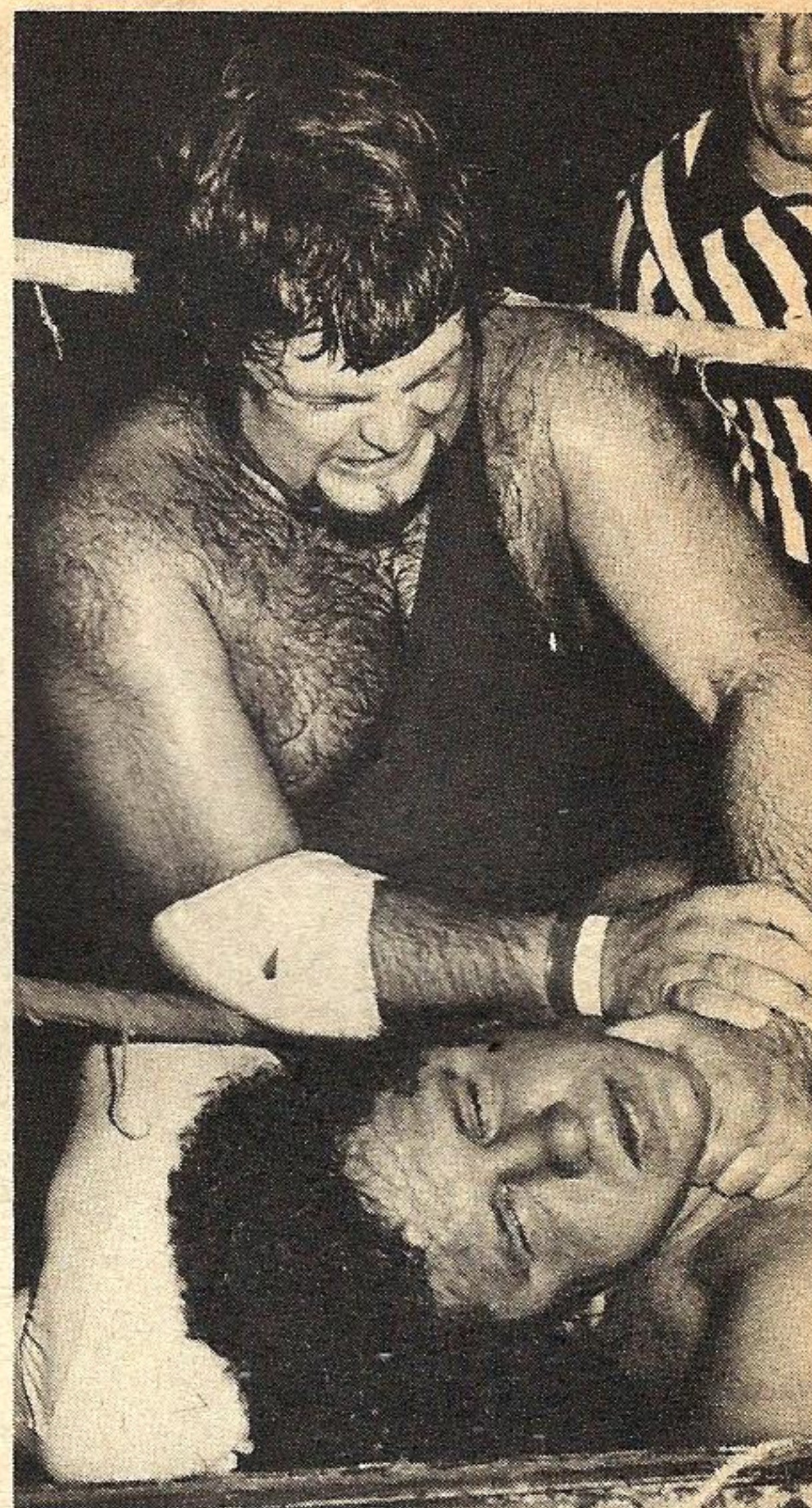
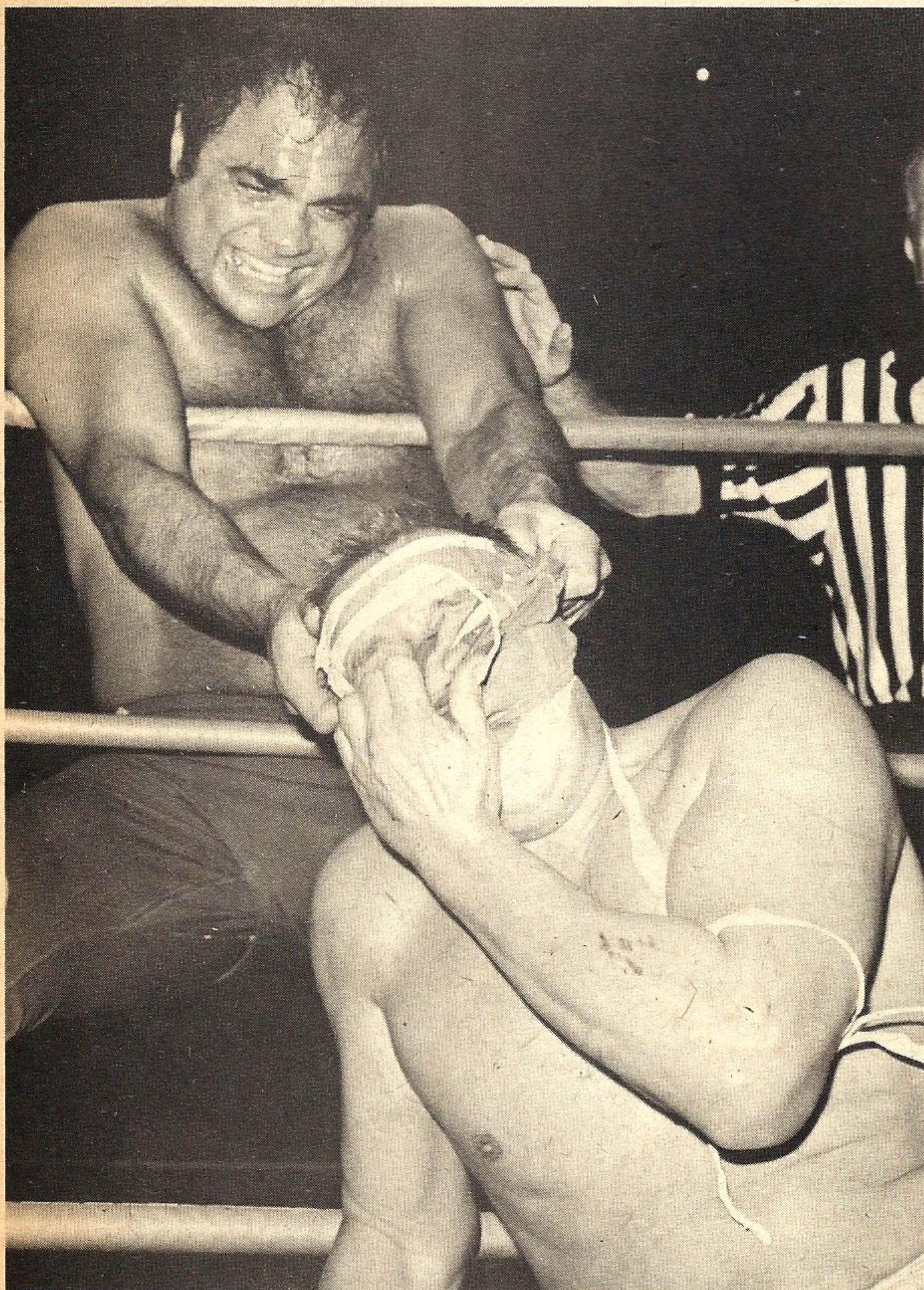
# ROOKIE

# OF THE YEAR

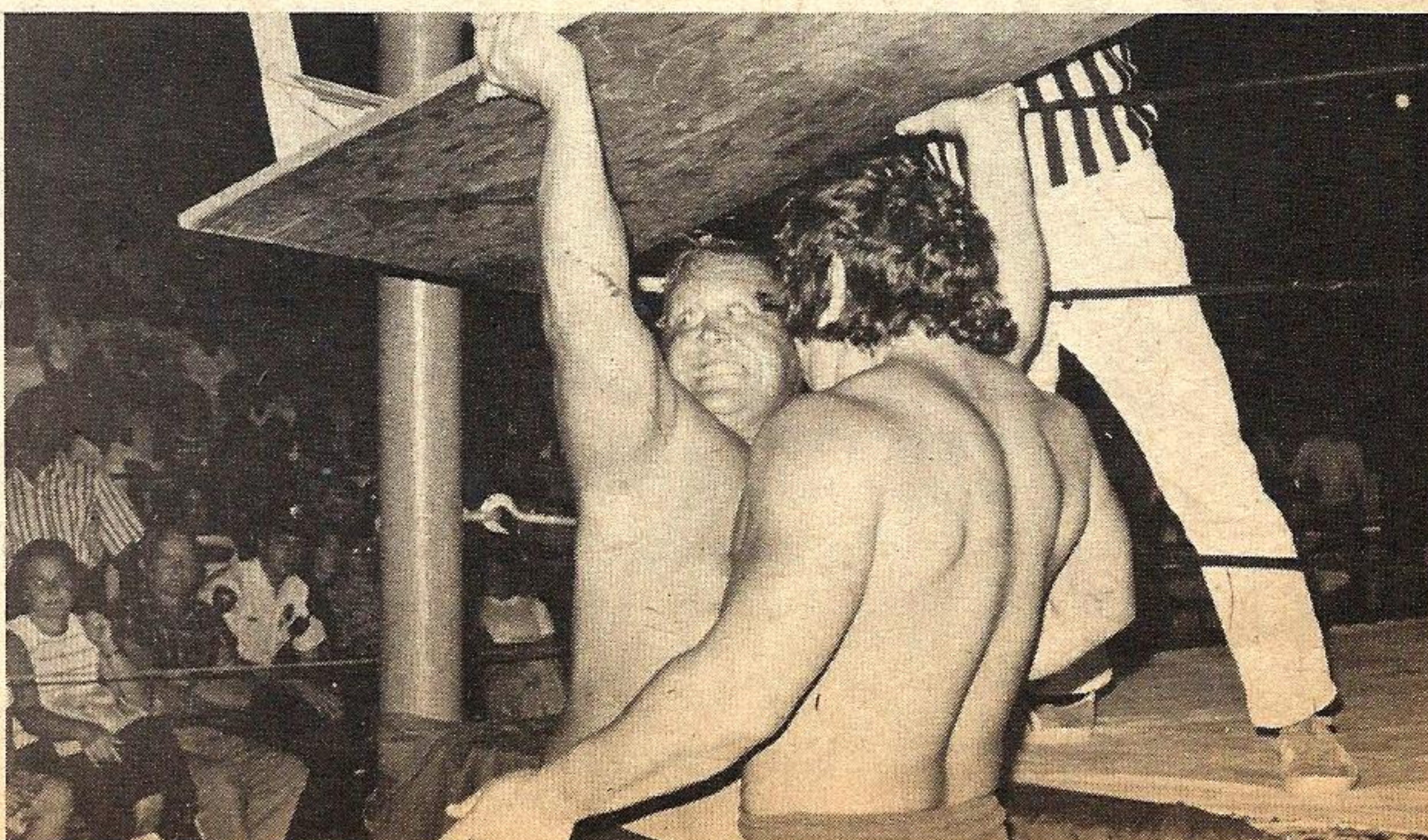


# OUTSTANDING PHOTOS

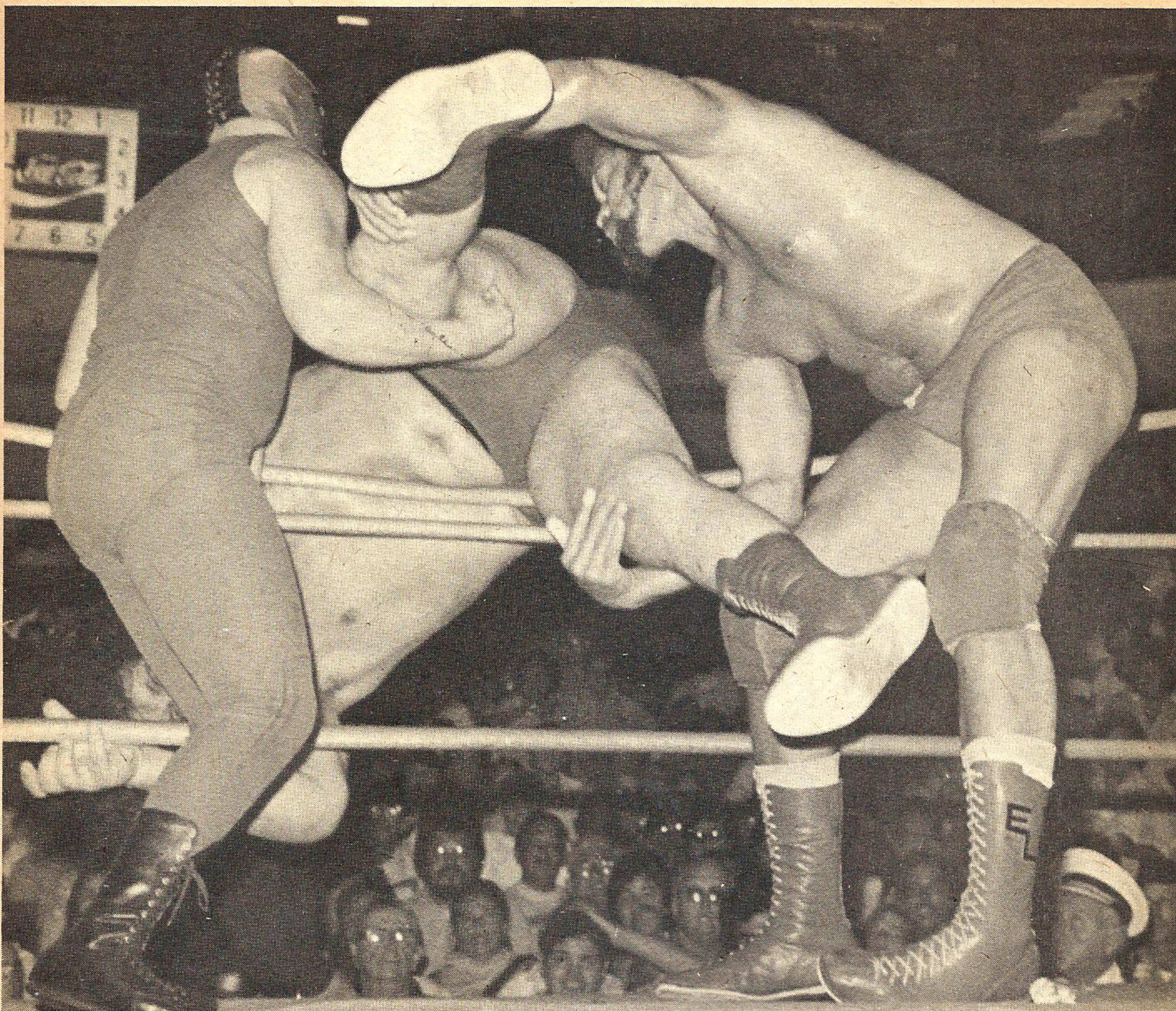
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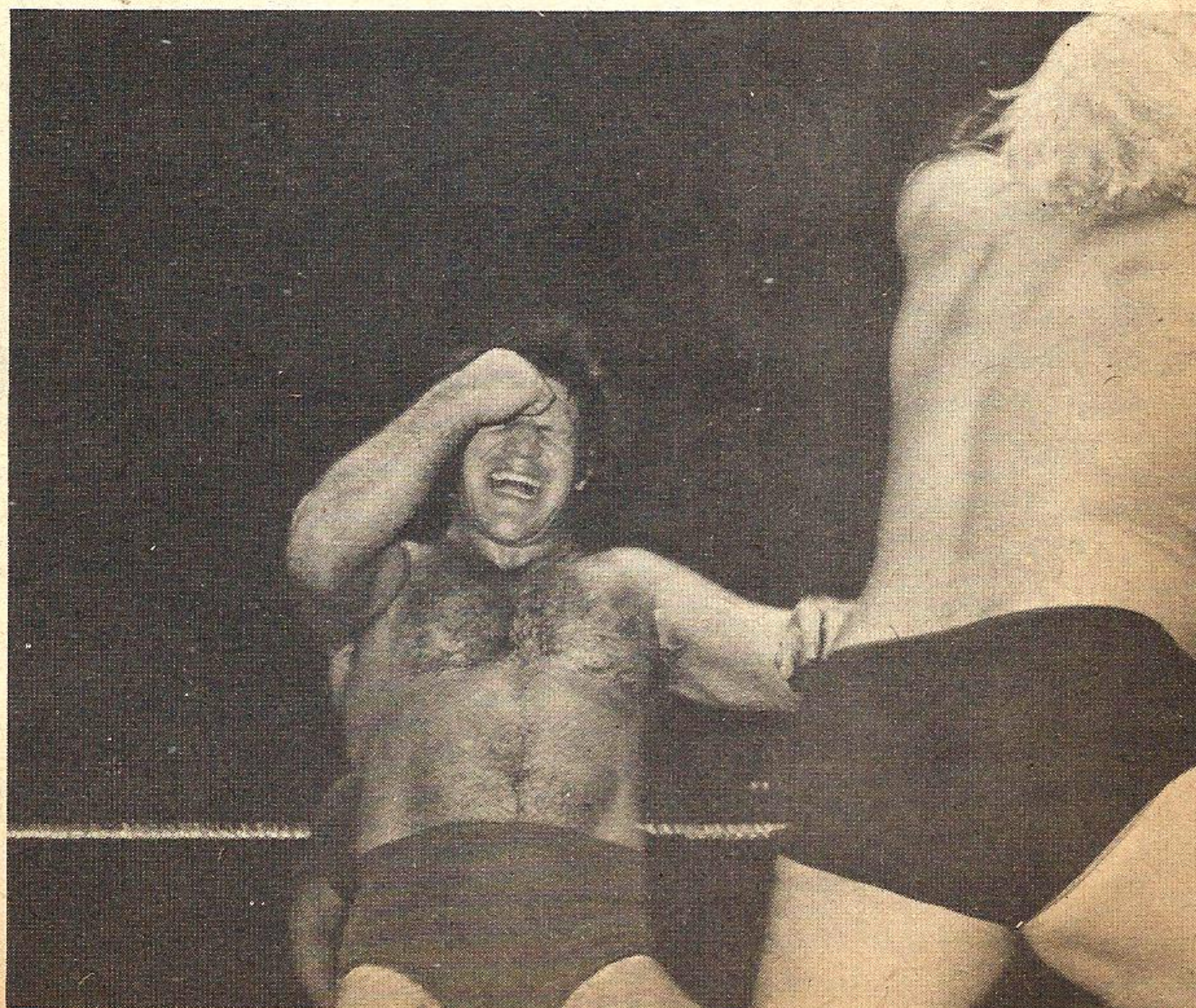
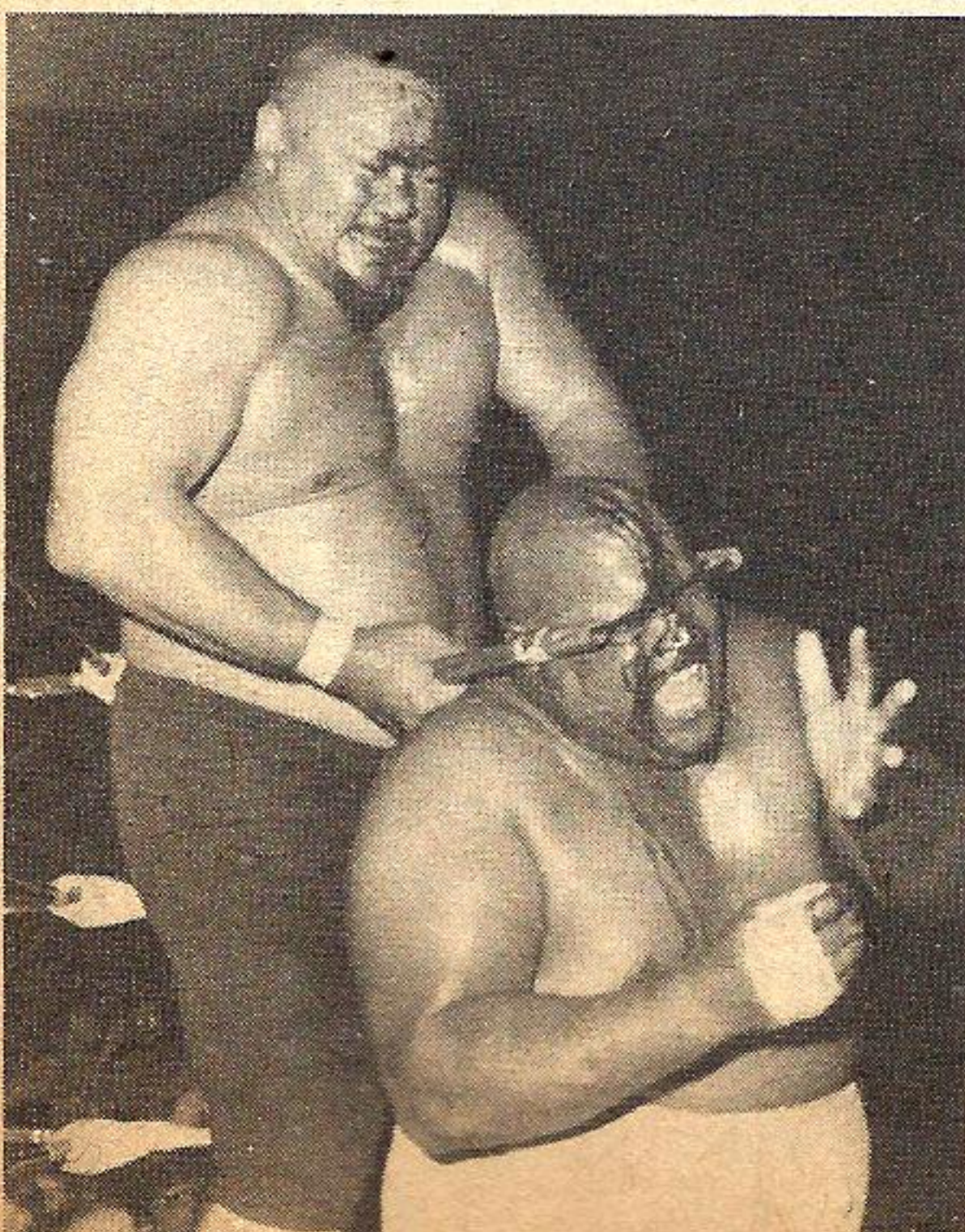
Above: Jerry Lawler crushes Terry Funk's windpipe, despite the screams from the referee to stop and the fact Funk is outside the ring ropes. It's a typical moment in this wild brawl. Left: John Tolos is tingling with anticipation as he tears off the mask of Zodiac. The masked grappler managed to flee with shreds of his mask still covering his face. Below left: Ken Patera is ready for the hurtling Mr. Fugli during a wild and reckless brawl. The two men brawled to a double disqualification that Carolina fans are still talking about! Below: Bulldog Brower thinks nothing of using a wooden press table as a weapon against Dino Bravo.







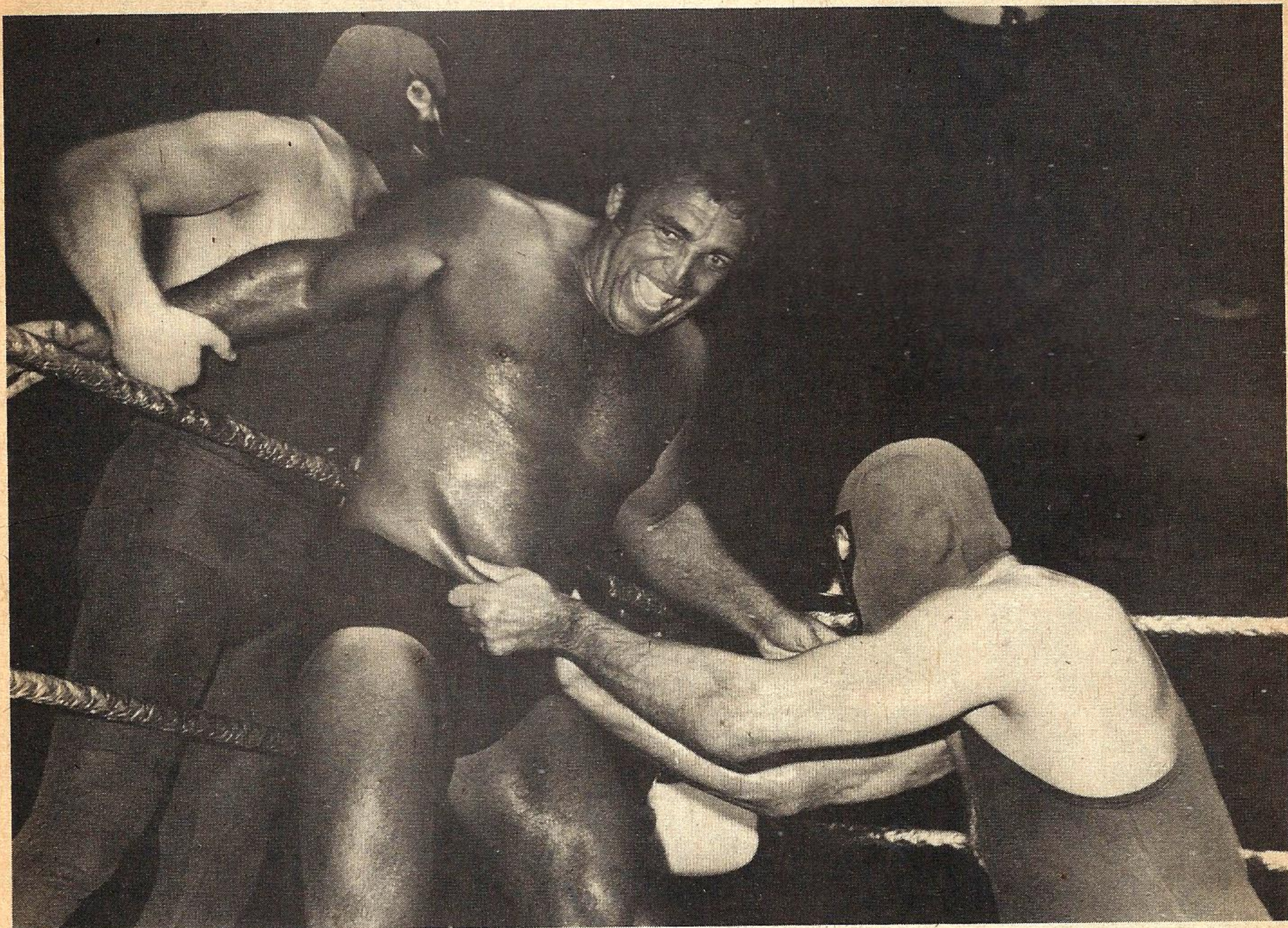
Above: It takes Inferno #1 and Ernie Ladd to hurl Andre the Giant over the ropes. Below: Professor Toru Tanaka has an Oriental weapon to squeeze Abdullah the Butcher's skull. Right: Bruno Sammartino reels from Stan Hansen's notorious "lariat."





# The Executioners

(Continued from Page 29)



know their identities. Only a few know for sure—and they're not talking. The Executioners promise swift retribution if their real identities are revealed to the public. It's a risk no one want to take.

In second place were the Anderson brothers. Everyone knows who Ole and Gene are—the most reprehensible tag team in the NWA. This team won the award last year. However, they couldn't overcome The Executioners' notoriety and mystery. Next year, it should be a real horse race between the two teams.

The team with the best chance of unseating The Executioners is the third place team, Billy White Wolf and Chief Jay Strongbow. Because they haven't been

successful in beating The Executioners, they failed to gain a majority of votes. If this pair becomes tag team champions in 1977, you can bet your last dollar they'll win "Tag Team of the Year" next year.

Though they received only a smattering of votes, the Valiants are a team with the most rabid fans in the world. Though the brothers are having some rough times, their fans follow each move with dedication. With a little luck next year, the Valiants will once again be the top team around.

The Executioners weren't surprised when they discovered they'd won the honor.

"Who else could have won?" laughed Executioner #1. "We're the top team around and everyone knows it. In fact, we're

better than anyone suspects. You might as well retire the award as long as we're around. No one's coming close to us. We're the greatest team that's ever been or ever will be."

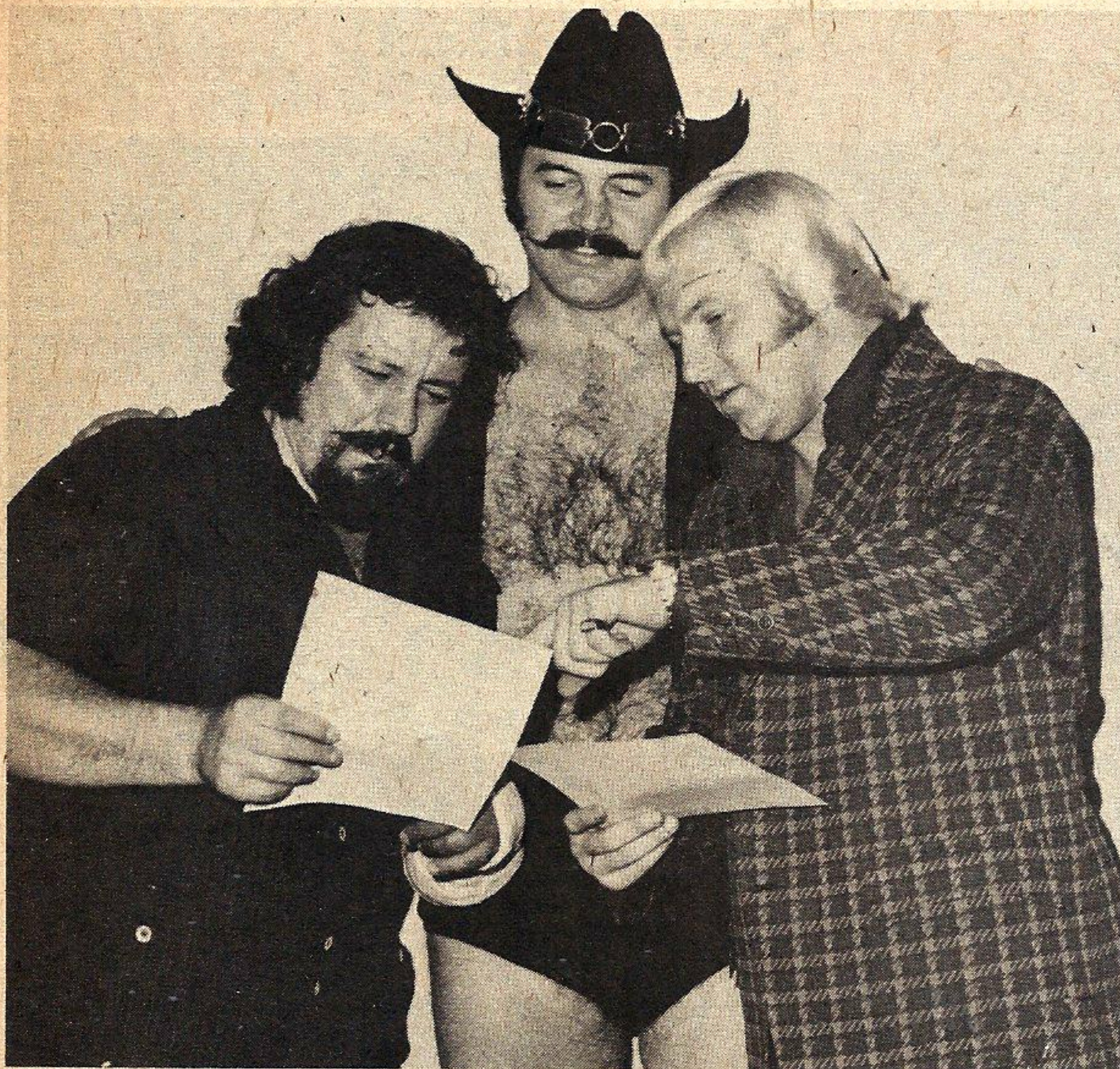
"We're going to make another fortune!" Albano screamed when told his team had won. "We'll get twice as much money as before, maybe three times. Albano will have his empire! I'll own wrestling! I'll own everyone in wrestling! I am invincible!"

The Executioners have been named by the fans "Tag Team of the Year." However, most of those who voted sincerely hope The Executioners won't be around for next year's poll. They all look forward to the day when wrestling will be freed from the yoke of The Executioners' oppression. □



# Bobby Heenan

(Continued from Page 31)



manager to watch in 1977.

One wouldn't expect Bobby Heenan to be grateful for the honor bestowed on him. He pretended not to even be excited.

"I knew it," Heenan replied calmly after hearing of his remarkably large majority, "so I'm not surprised. Every so often, a man is so great even the idiot fans know it. I'm that great; too magnificent to be ignored. It must have been a shock to those clowns to finally vote for someone splendid. I wonder how they felt doing something intelligent."

For being the man behind the AWA's champions, Bobby Heenan received an incredible number of votes to win "Manager of the Year." His accomplishments are not worthy of honor, for his success is the most ruthless in sports. It's a sad occasion for wrestling. □

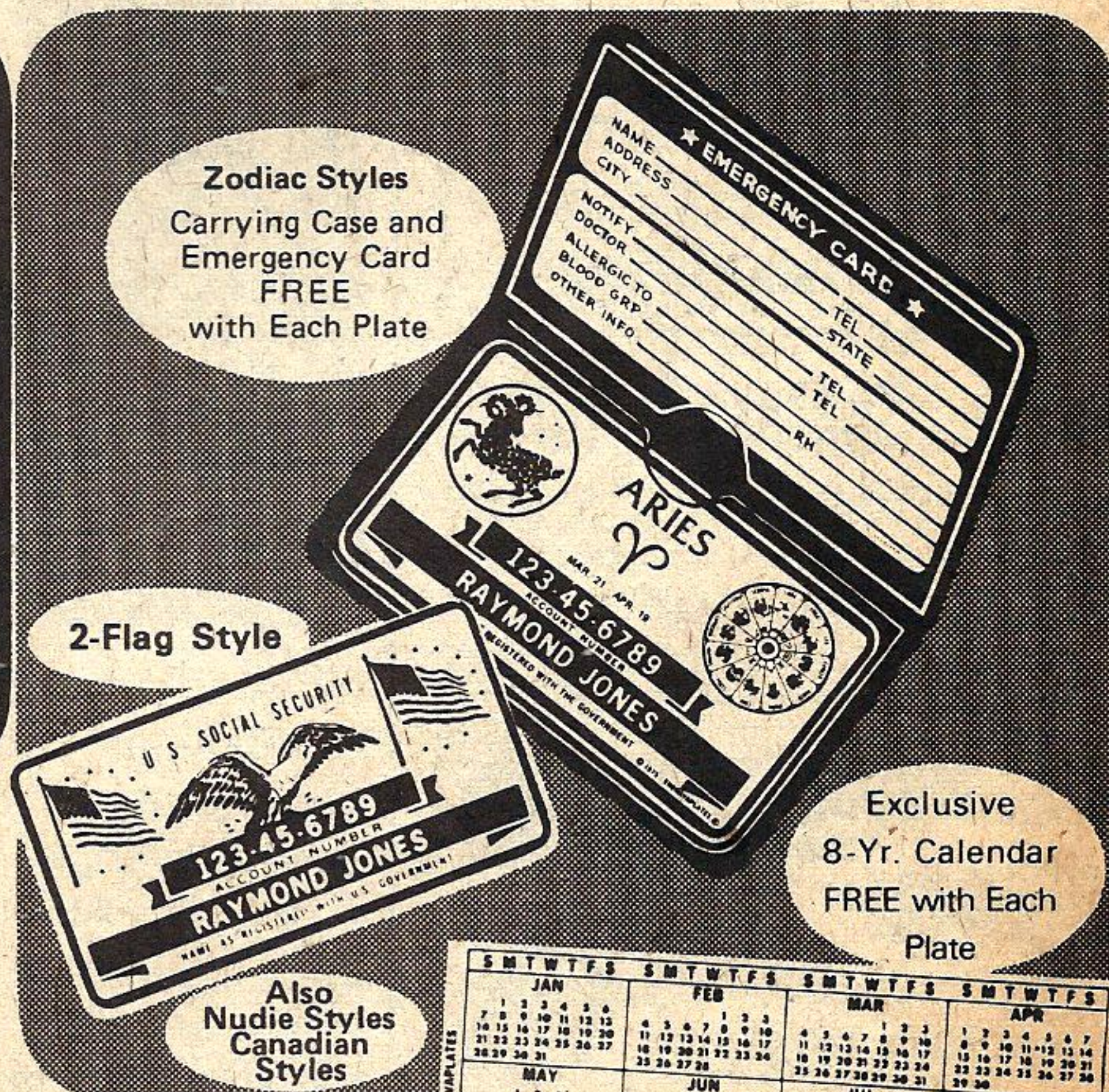
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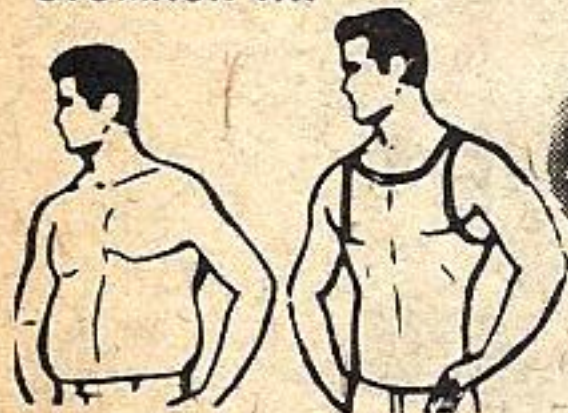
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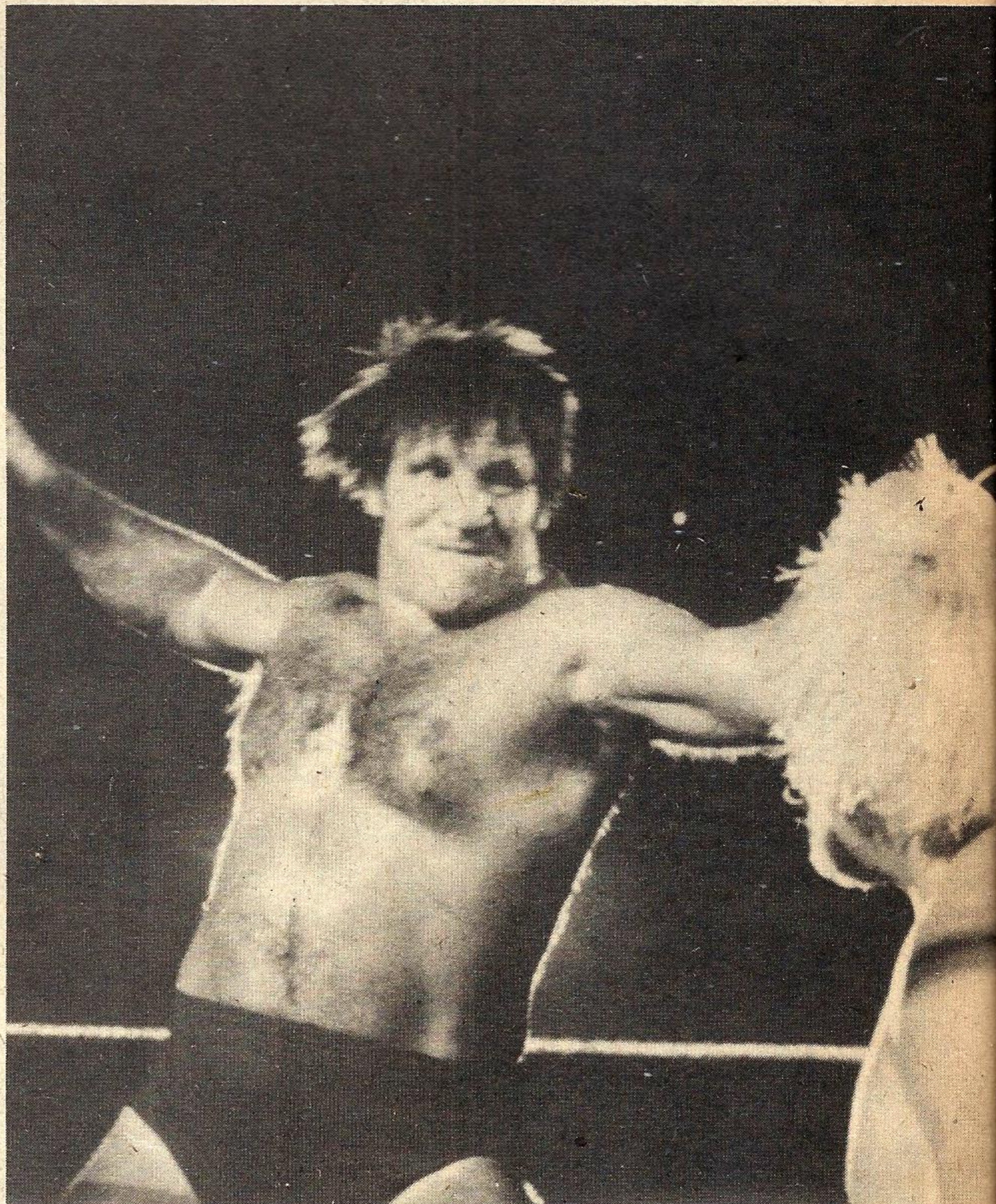
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## Bruno Sammartino VS. Stan Hansen

(Continued from Page 33)



for Andre the Giant's conquest of Abdullah the Butcher. This was a furious brawl in which Andre avenged everyone ever tortured by Abdullah. It is sure to be a classic in wrestling lore. However, since there was little wrestling skill involved, with just one man's brute strength dominating, it did not receive enough votes to win. Most of Andre's fans most appreciate his scientific skills, not his brawling.

The voting reflected a good year throughout wrestling. There were many matches

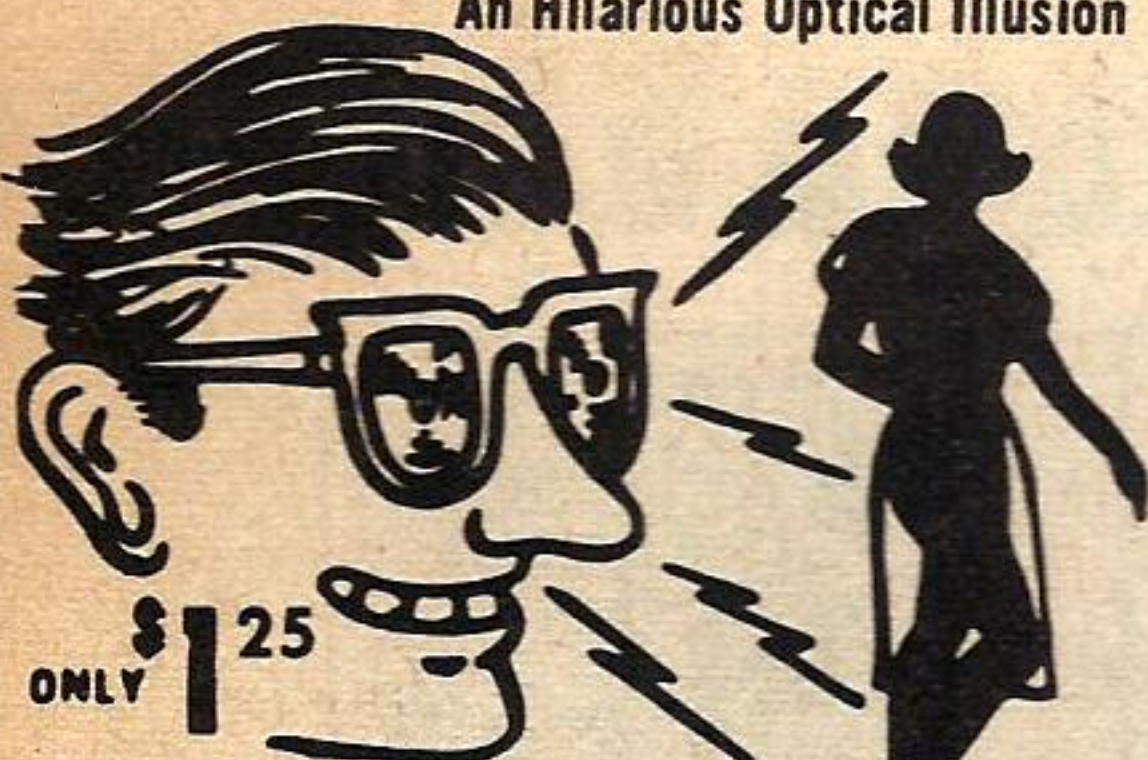
named with many different combinations. Dusty Rhodes was mentioned often, but not often enough against a particular opponent. Jerry Lawler suffered the same fate. Every area also had its local favorite that never managed to gain national attention.

Wrestling can be proud of Hansen against Sammartino, "Match of the Year." It was a fine battle filled with human drama, awesome in its consequences. It would make any year one to remember. □



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## Terry Funk

(Continued from Page 35)

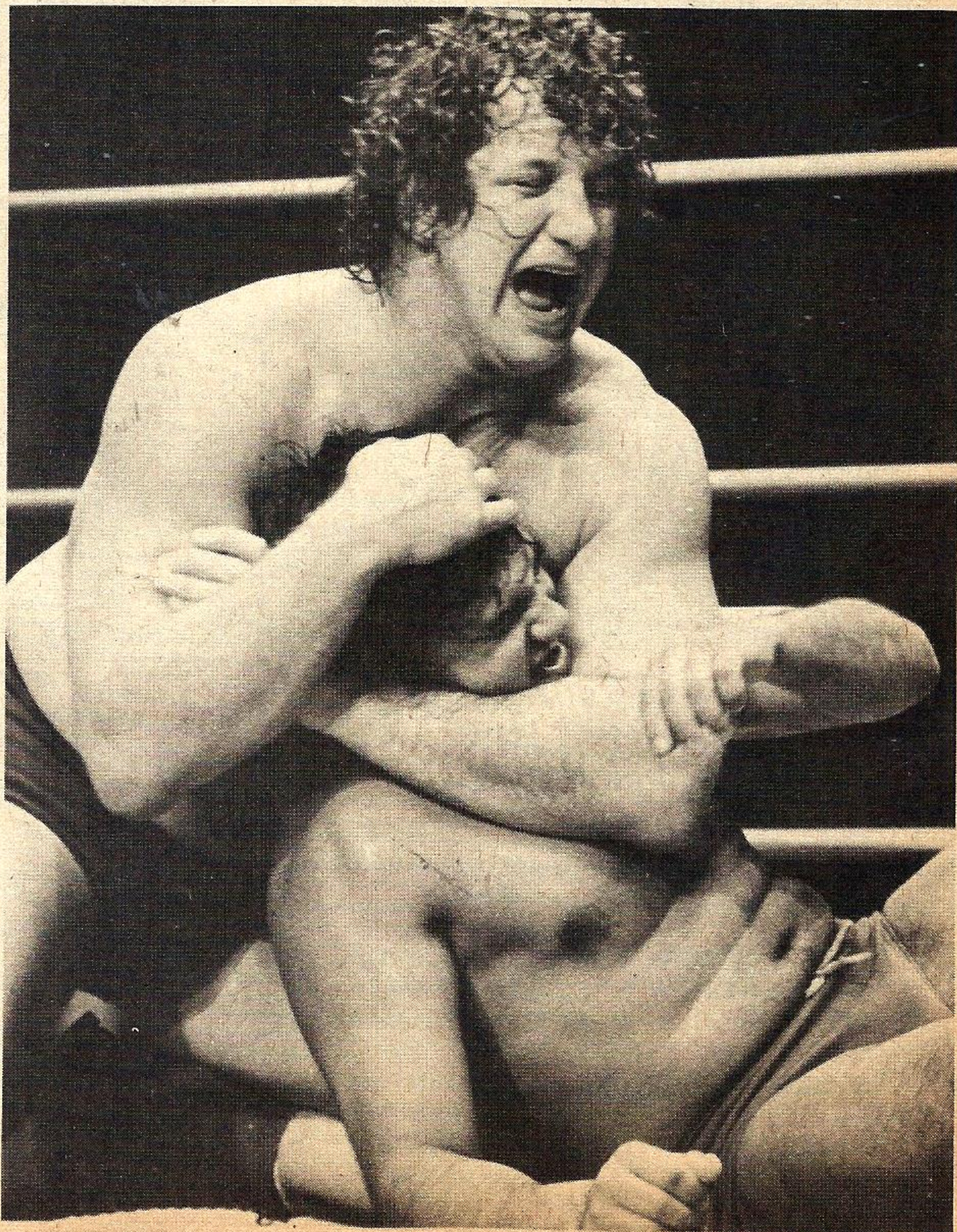
sure he'll be a top contender for 1977 honors.

There were over 300 wrestlers who received mention in this category. Some are unknown outside their local areas. Others enjoy world-wide reputations. Each has done some accomplishment for a fan to think of him or her as the sport's supreme athlete. More and more, the quality of today's athlete reflects the growth and improvement of wrestling. This dynamic sport will continue to prosper as long as it enjoys a pool of such extraordinary athletes.

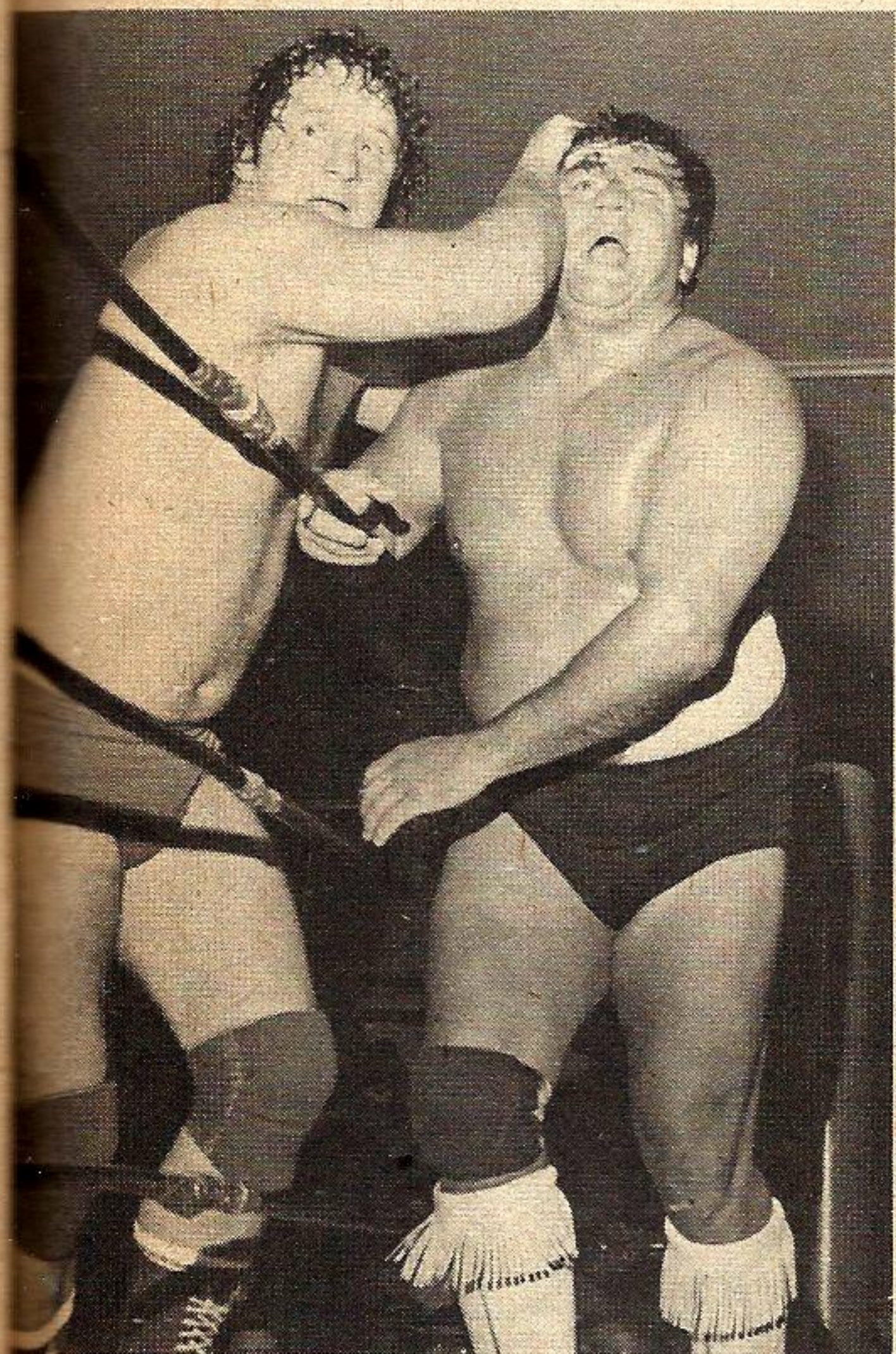
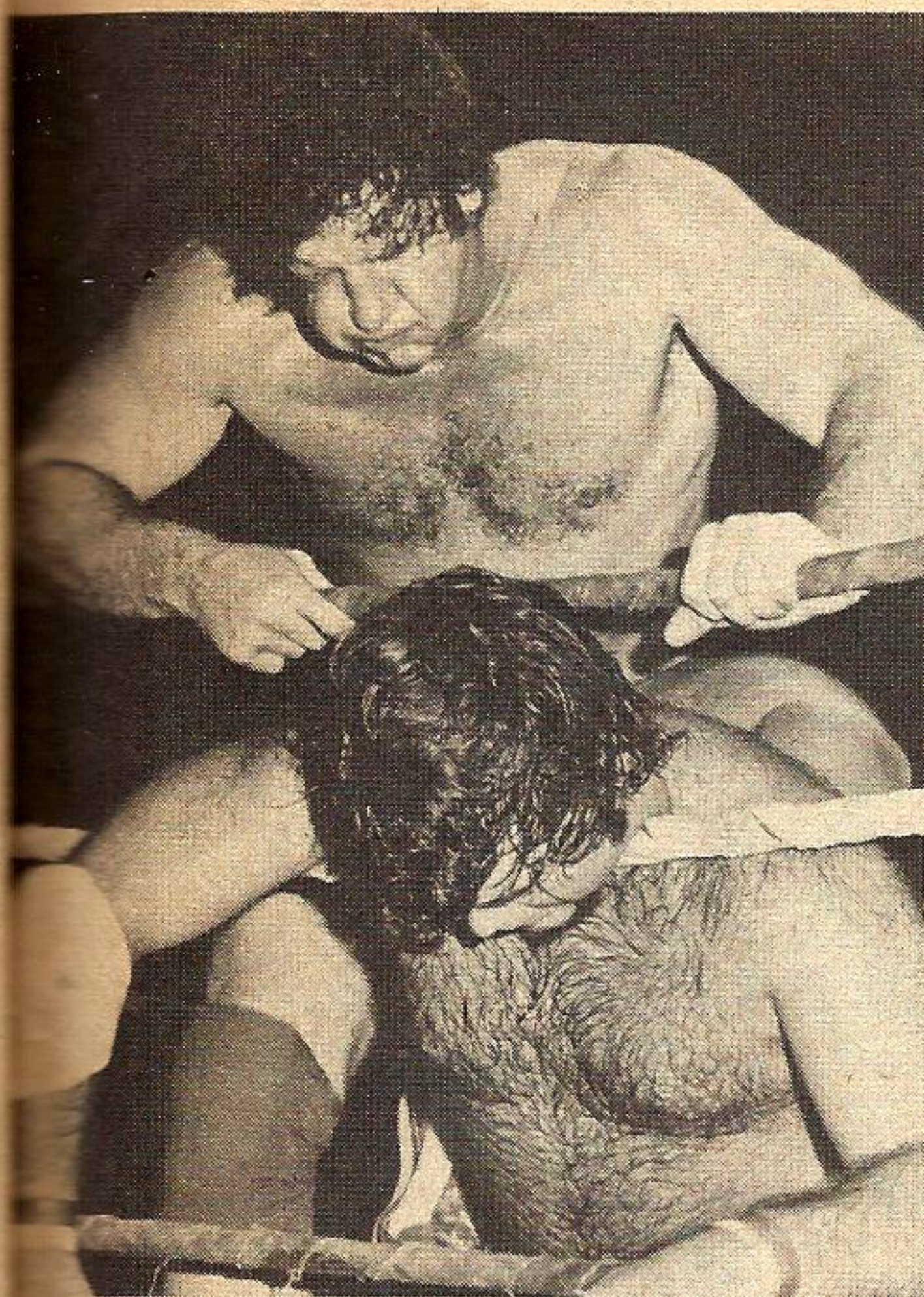
This year, 1976, Terry Funk has been named top man by the most knowledgeable people in the sport. Funk has been called nasty and cold over the years, but he was warmly delighted when informed of his honor.

"I had a feeling this was my year," he said excitedly, "the year of Terry Funk. It's been a great year for me all around, but this award makes it the best ever. 'Wrestler of the Year.'—that means the world to me.

"I've said a lot of rotten things about some of the fans. But for me to win, some of them must have voted for me, anyway.







That's really remarkable. I'm not taking anything back I said about them, because I was right at the time, but they are fair. I may not like them from now on, but you can bet I'll respect them a whole lot more."

This has been a great year for wrestling. It's been the best year for Terry Funk, thanks to the fans and the award, "Wrestler of the Year."

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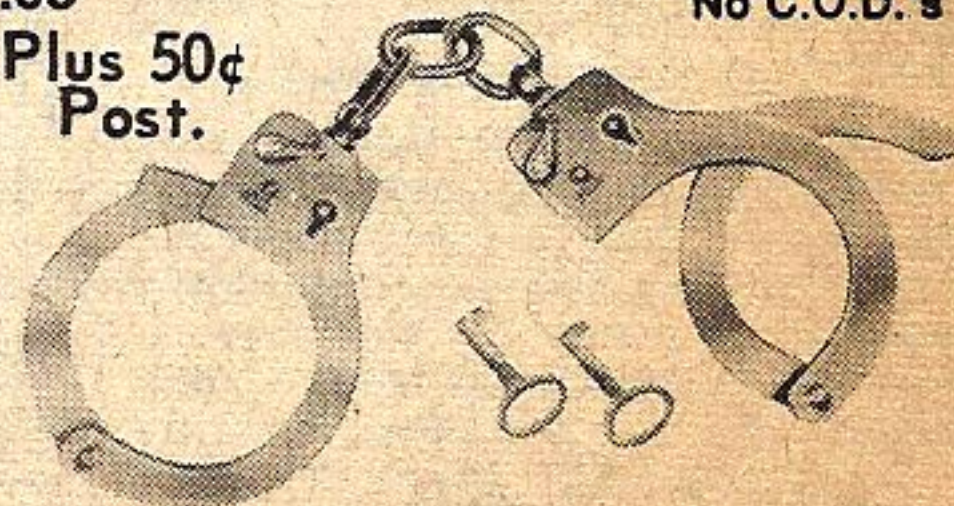
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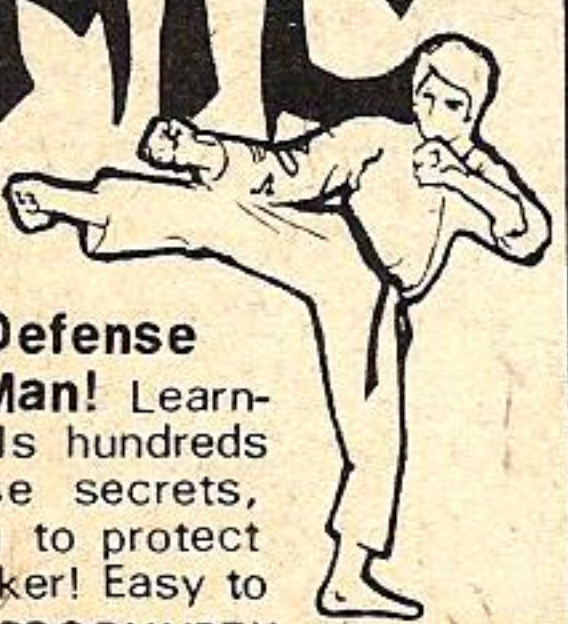
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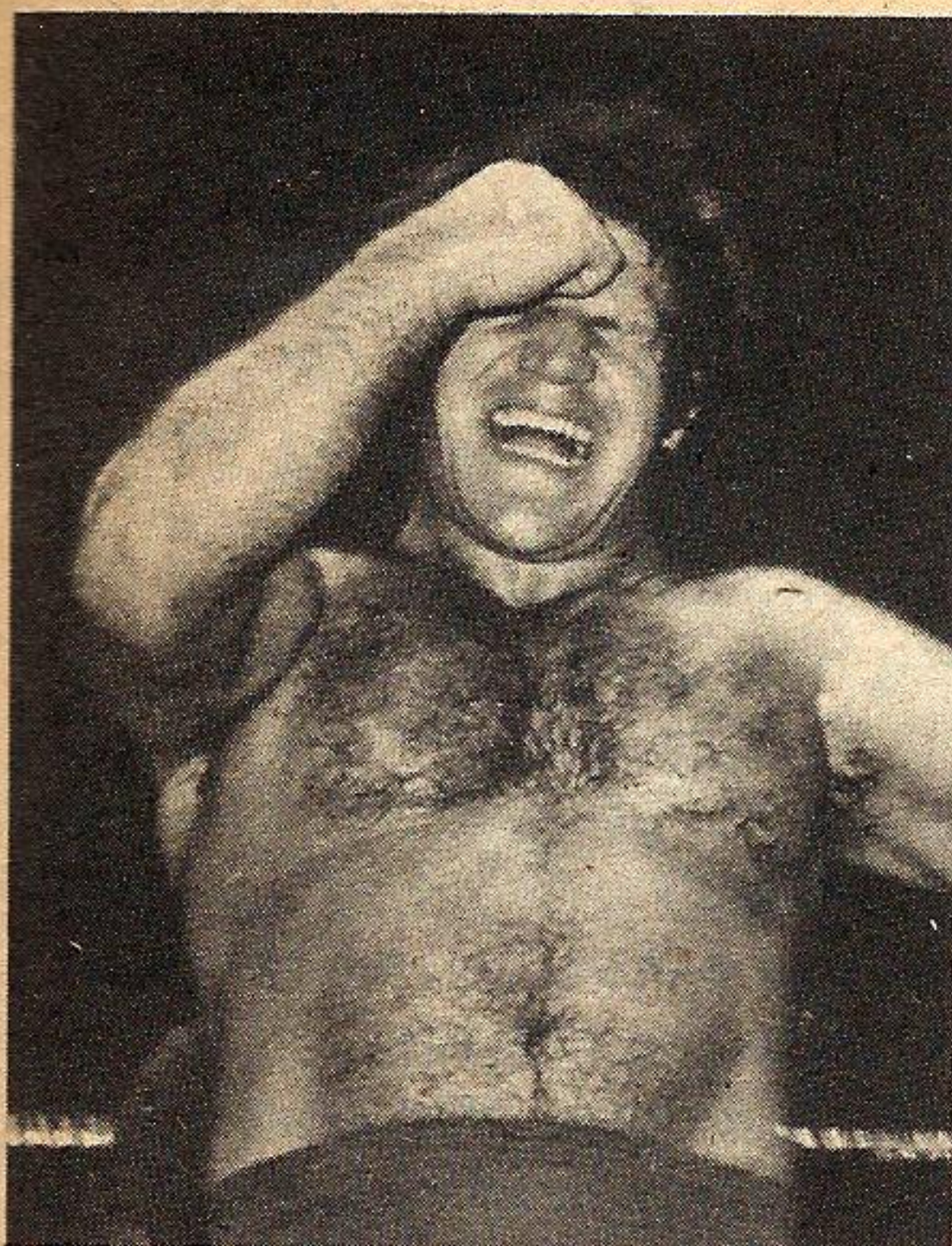
(Continued from Page 37)



career to be over, especially after the pronouncements Flair shouted about Wahoo being permanently crippled. It was with relief and joy fans welcomed back Wahoo to the

mat wars; his victory over Flair the greatest success of his career. Those who believed Wahoo to be the inspirational wrestler of the year chose a man who continues to be great





athlete and remarkable human being.

Bob Roop and Bob Armstrong suffered broken legs during the year but came back and wrestled as well as ever. Only professional athletes can appreciate the horror a broken leg can mean to a man whose career centers around his body. Many men are never able to be effective again after suffering a mat injury. Roop and Armstrong are to be congratulated on their determination and courage.

Sammartino, when he learned of his honor, was stunned with joy. There was a catch in his voice from welling emotion when he spoke.

"Of all the honors I've won," Bruno declared, "this is the most important. To know the fans have gotten inspiration from what I've done, people may become a little braver because of me, it is the greatest honor a man can receive. The fans have made a poor Italian immigrant into an American success story. Everything I do is intended to repay them for their generosity. This award shows I have been able to give them something back."

"Inspirational Wrestler of the Year" is Bruno Sammartino. It's an award he richly deserves. He went through agony to earn it. ☐

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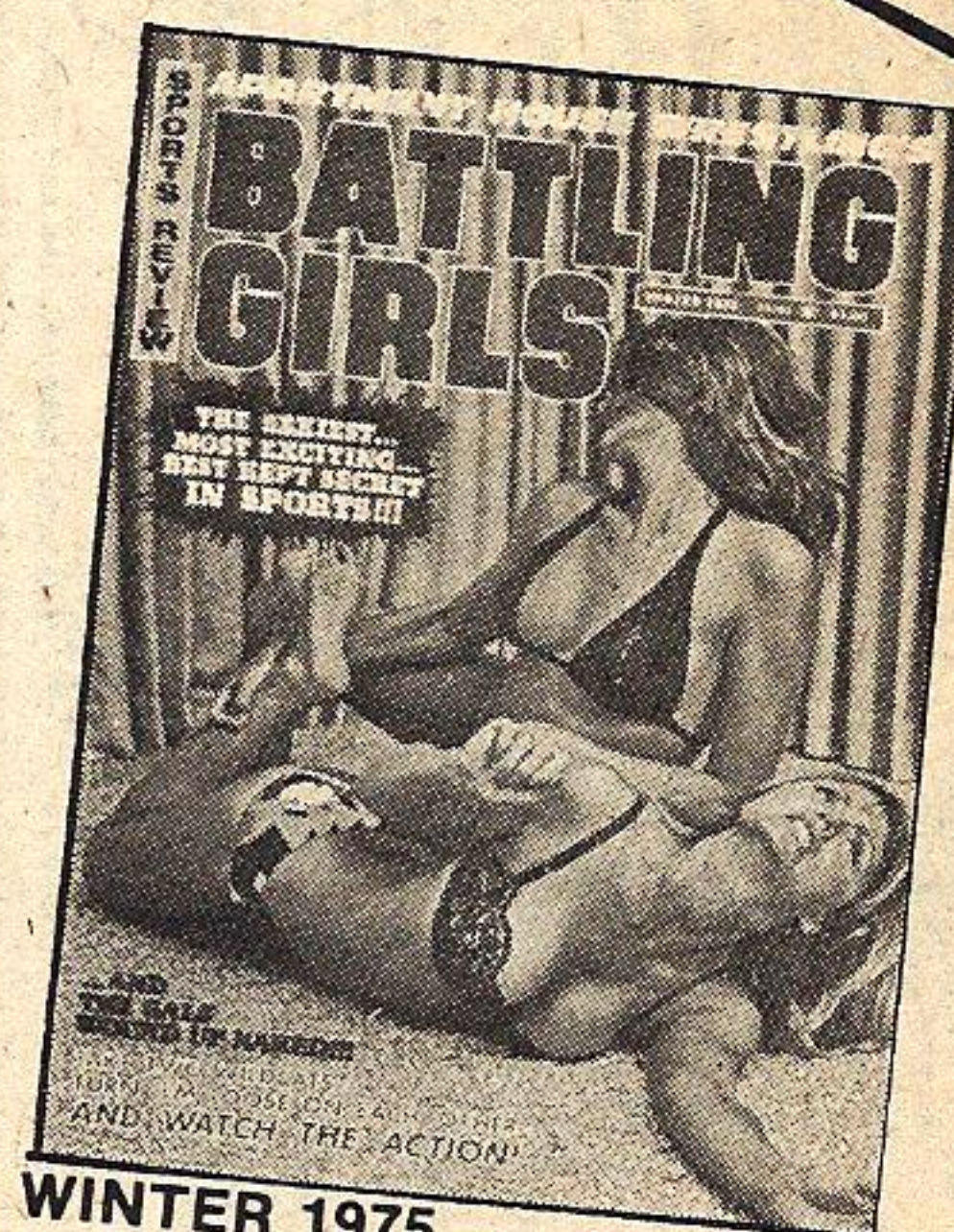
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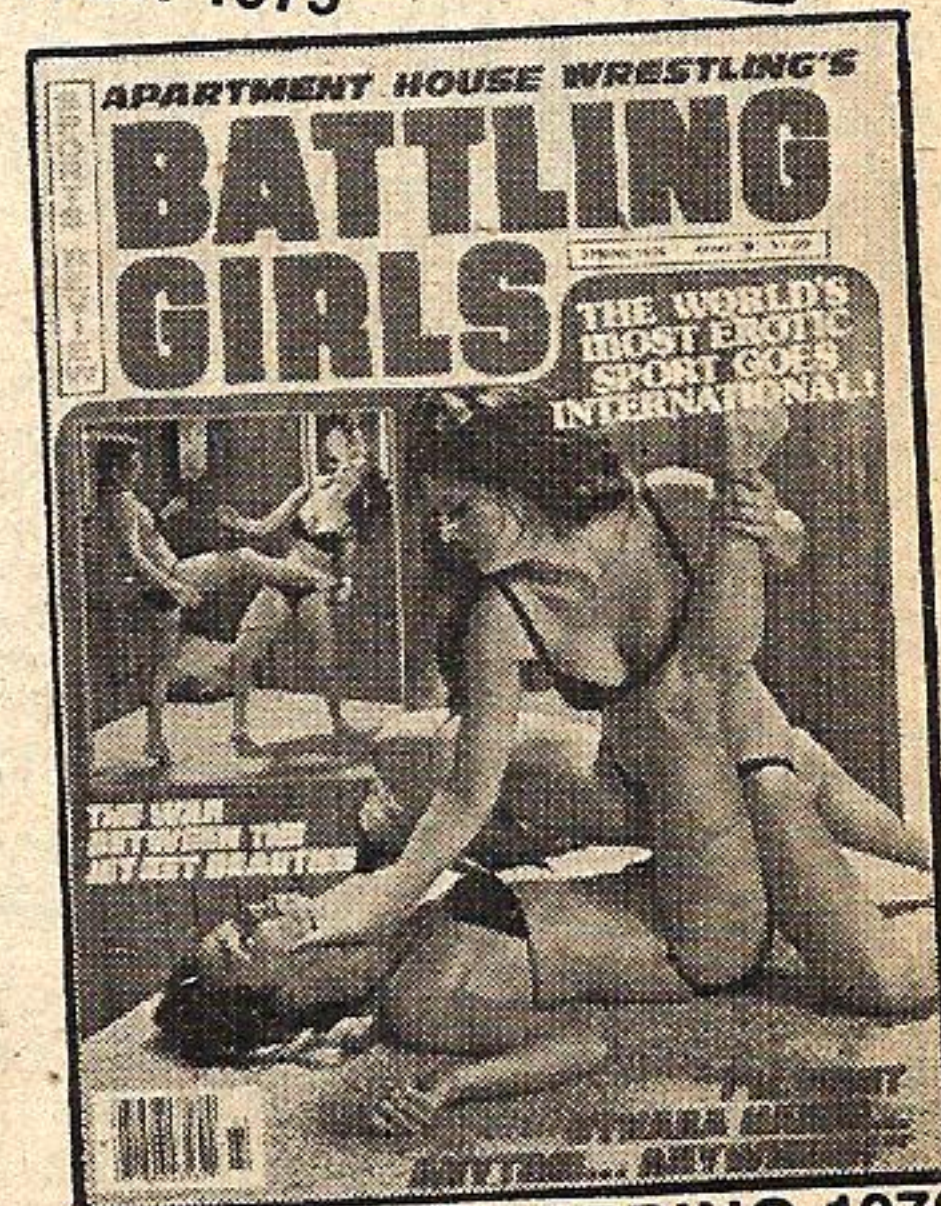
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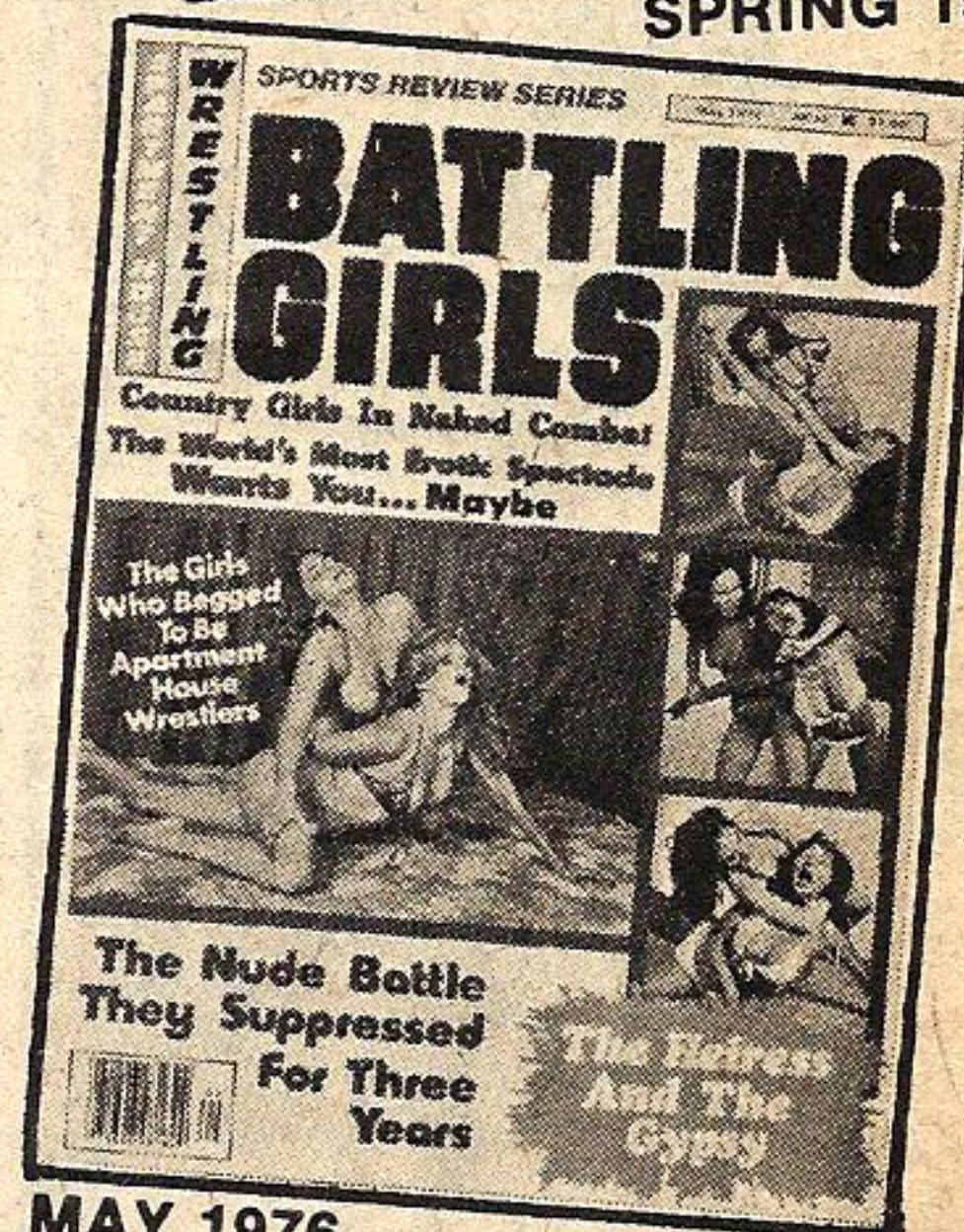
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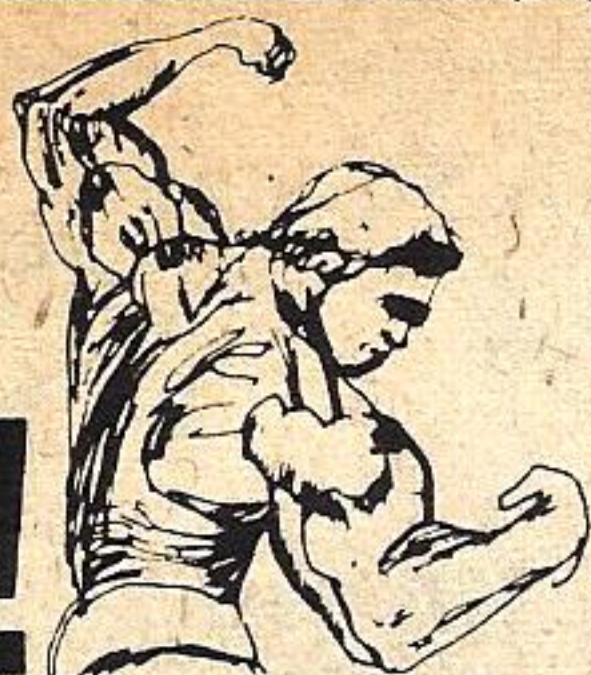


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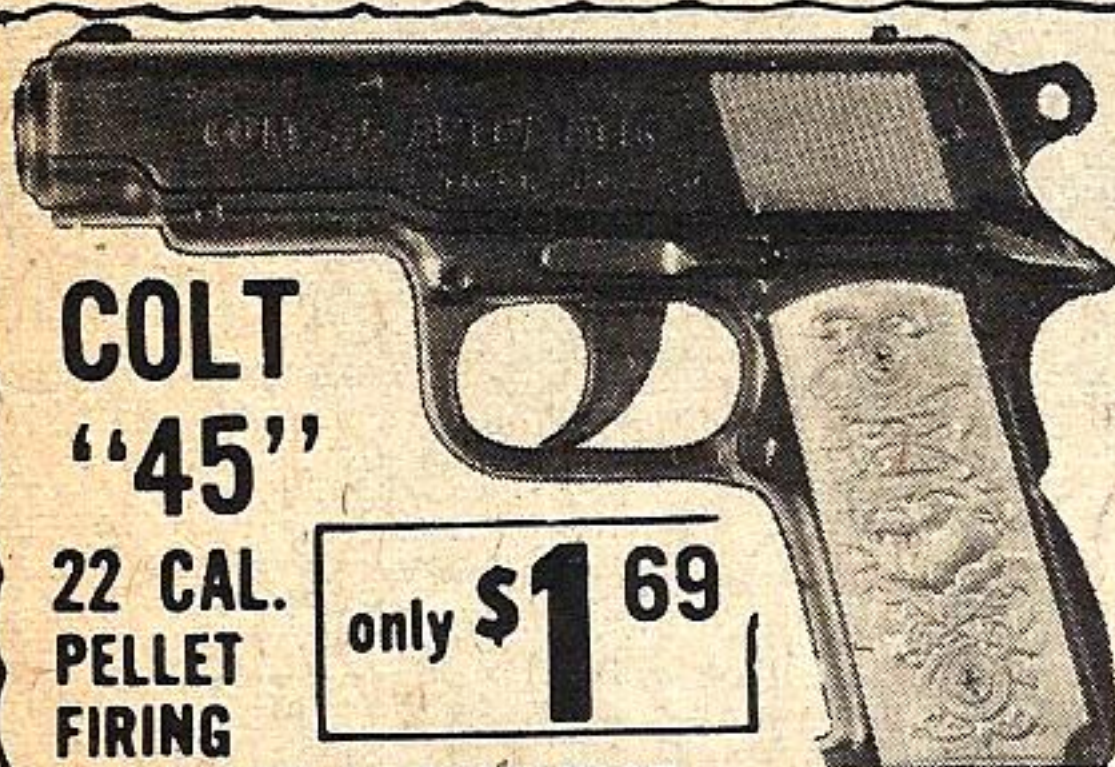


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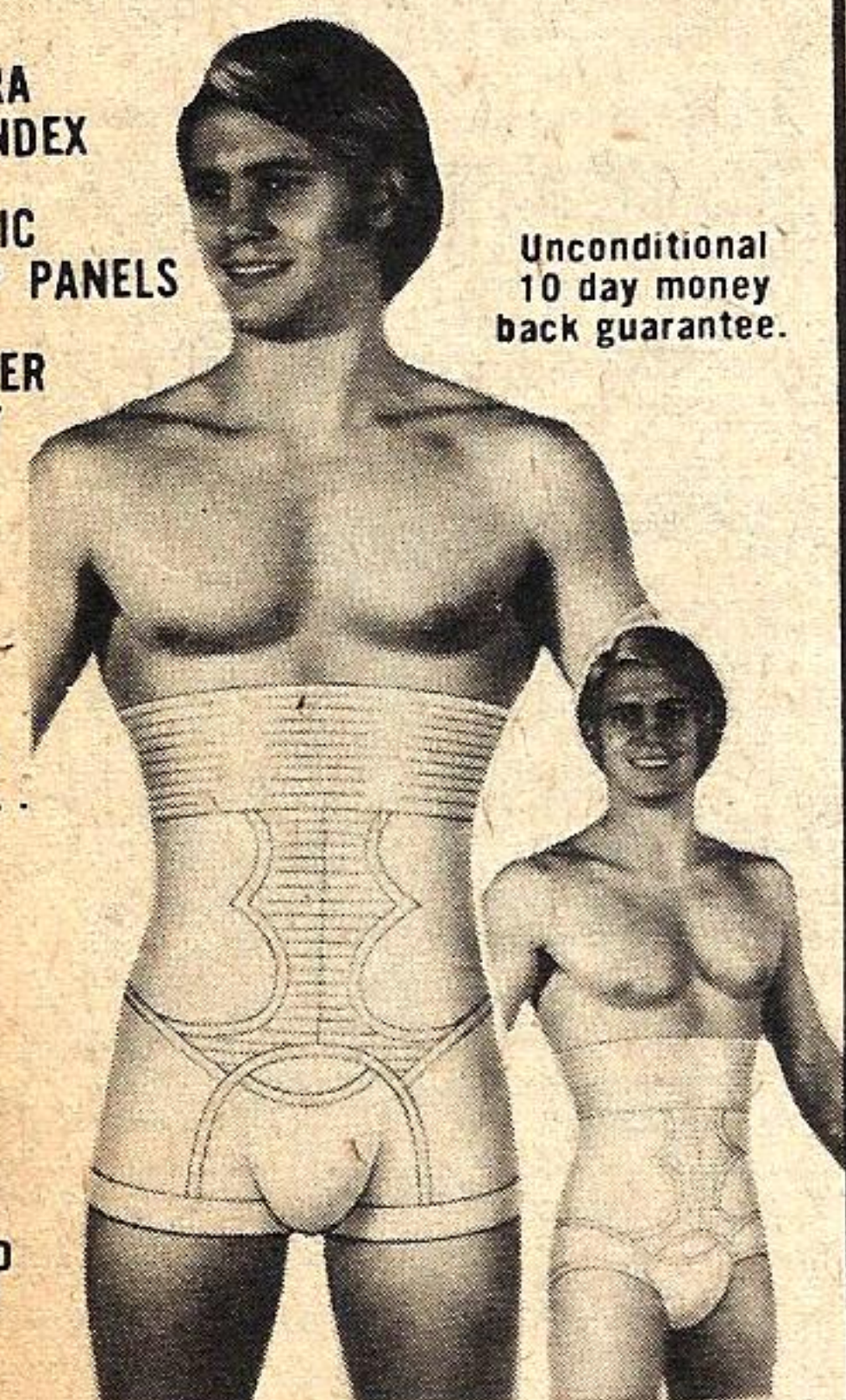
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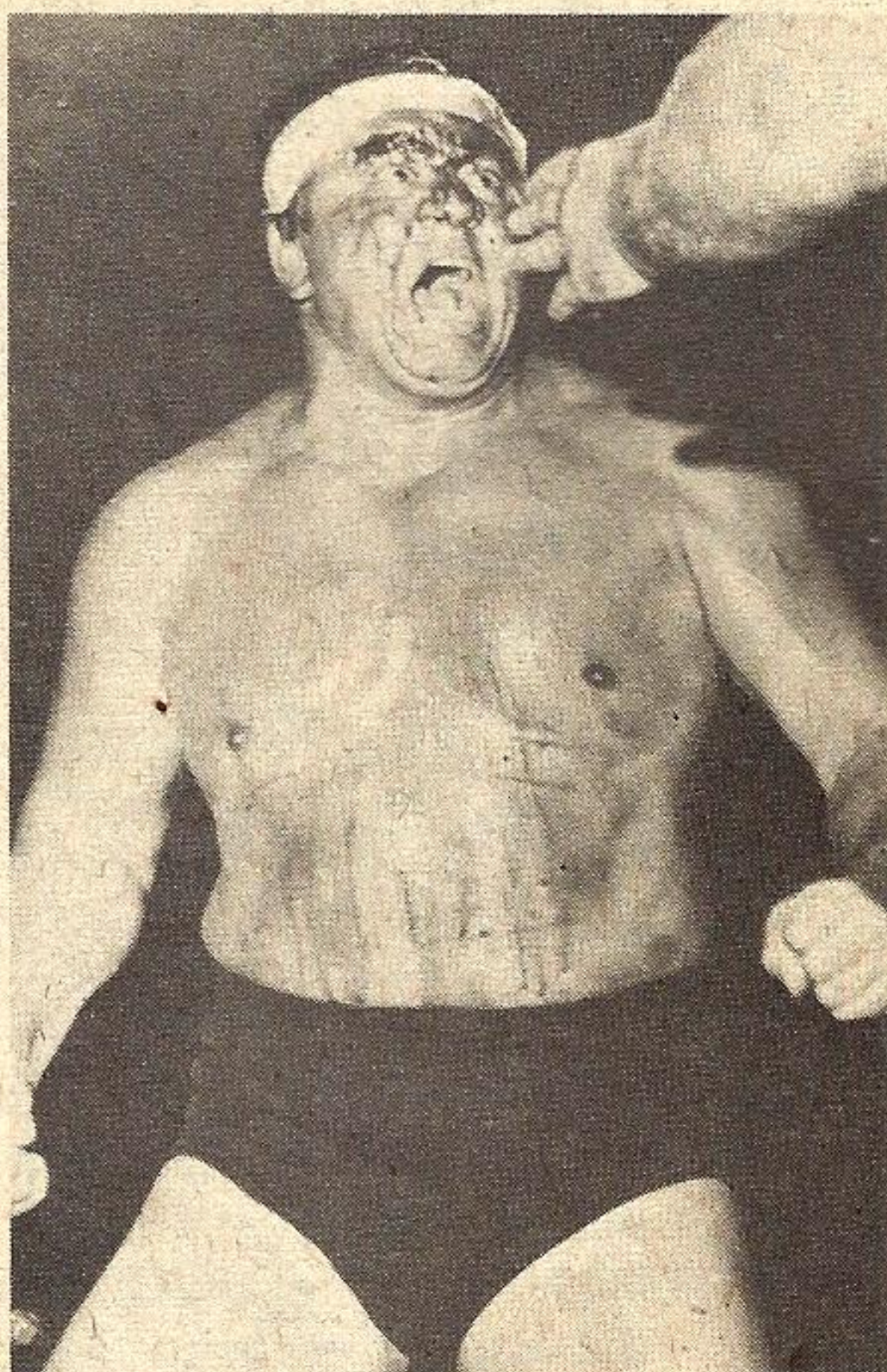
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## Wahoo McDaniel

(Continued from Page 39)



Right behind McDaniel was Chief Jay Strongbow, always a man who garners many votes in this poll. Strongbow captures the hearts of fans wherever he goes, bringing them his unique brand of wrestling. He attracts fans with his kindness and charisma. Every year, he is sure to be in the running.

Last year's "Wrestler of the Year" came in third place in this year's "Most Popular" category. Mr. Wrestling II has thrilled fans all year with top matches. It's no wonder they'd reward him with so many votes attesting to his popularity.

Anyone who hears the cheers when Ivan Putski enters an







arean knows he scored well in this poll. It was his misfortune to be overshadowed by the remarkable events that convulsed the WWWF this year: Bruno Sammartino's injury and return plus the arrival of The Executioners. If there wasn't so much turmoil in the division to take away from his accomplishments, Ivan might have won it all this year.

When Wahoo was told of his victory, the war whoop of victory almost shattered the telephone.


"I can't believe it!" McDaniell screamed. "This is just great! Are you sure its true? There won't be a recount?"

We assured him he was the official winner for 1976.

"Of course," he declared in a somewhat calmer voice, "I want to thank the fans who voted for me. I wish I could thank them each personally. I'd also like to thank professional wrestling for letting me earn a living doing something I love. At this moment, when a man knows he's succeeded, all the struggle and pain seem worth the price a hundred times over."

According to friends, Wahoo didn't have a wild celebration over his victory. He just stayed home with a few close friends, sitting in a chair with a holy man smile. He was at peace with the world, his ambitions, and his demons.

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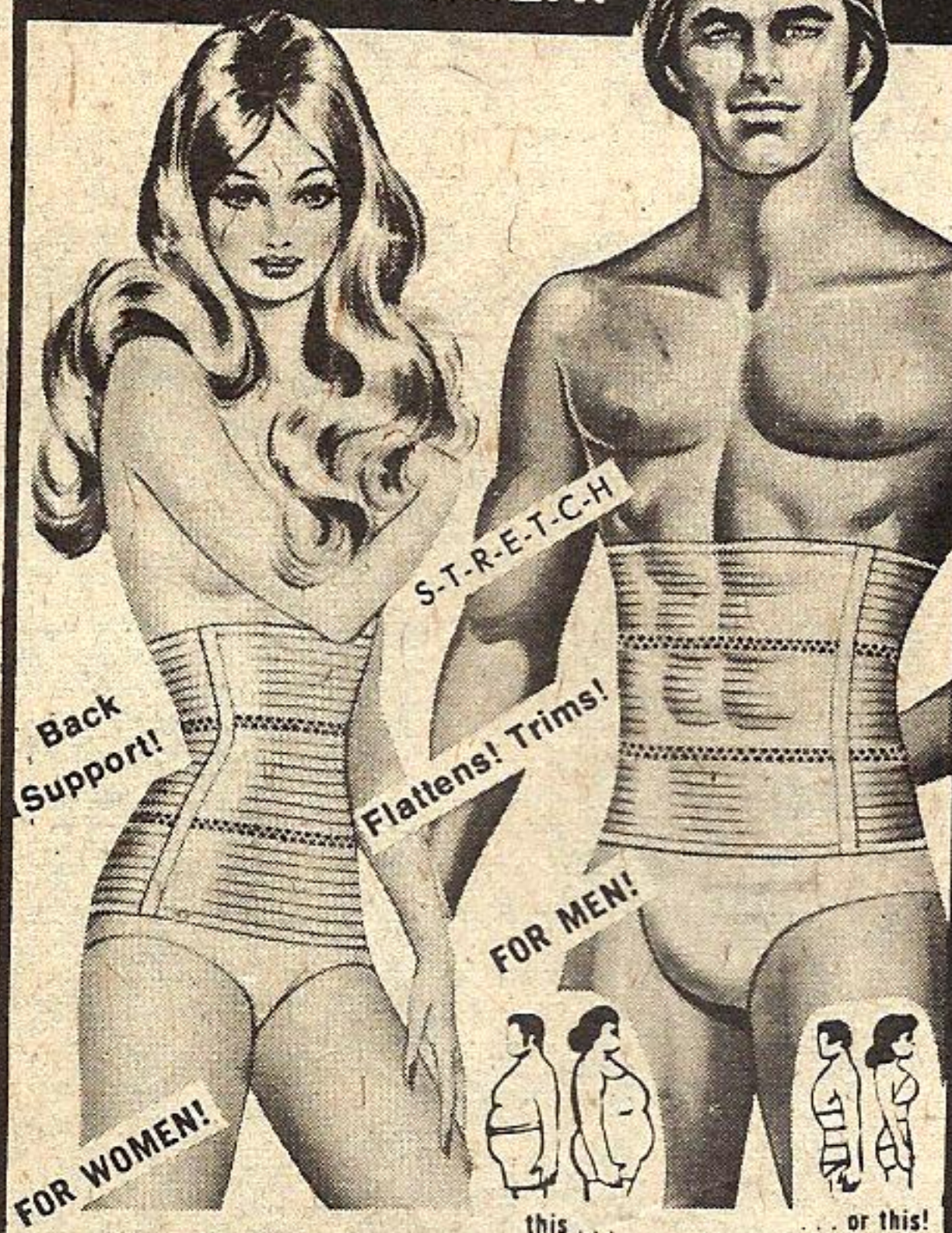
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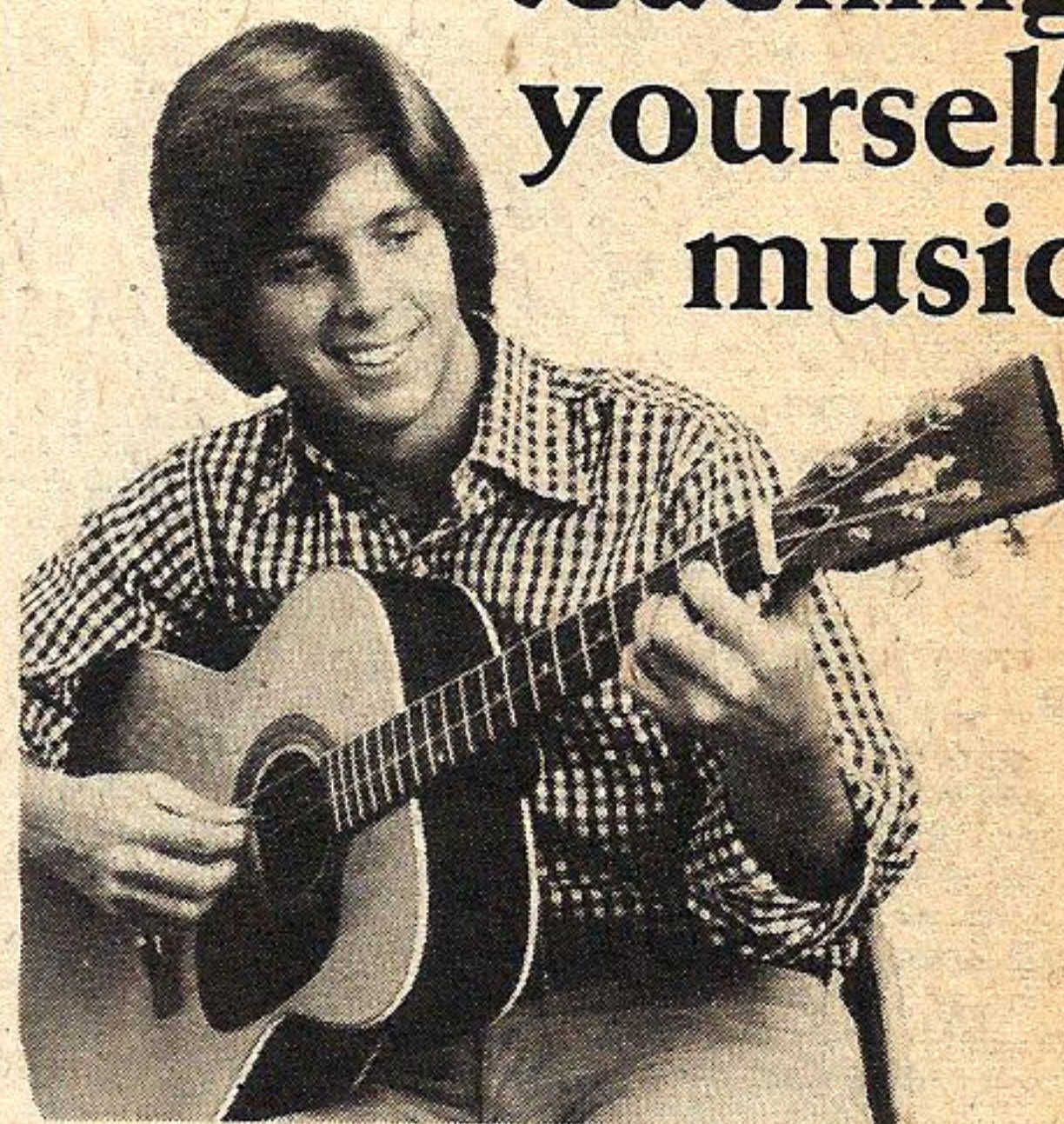
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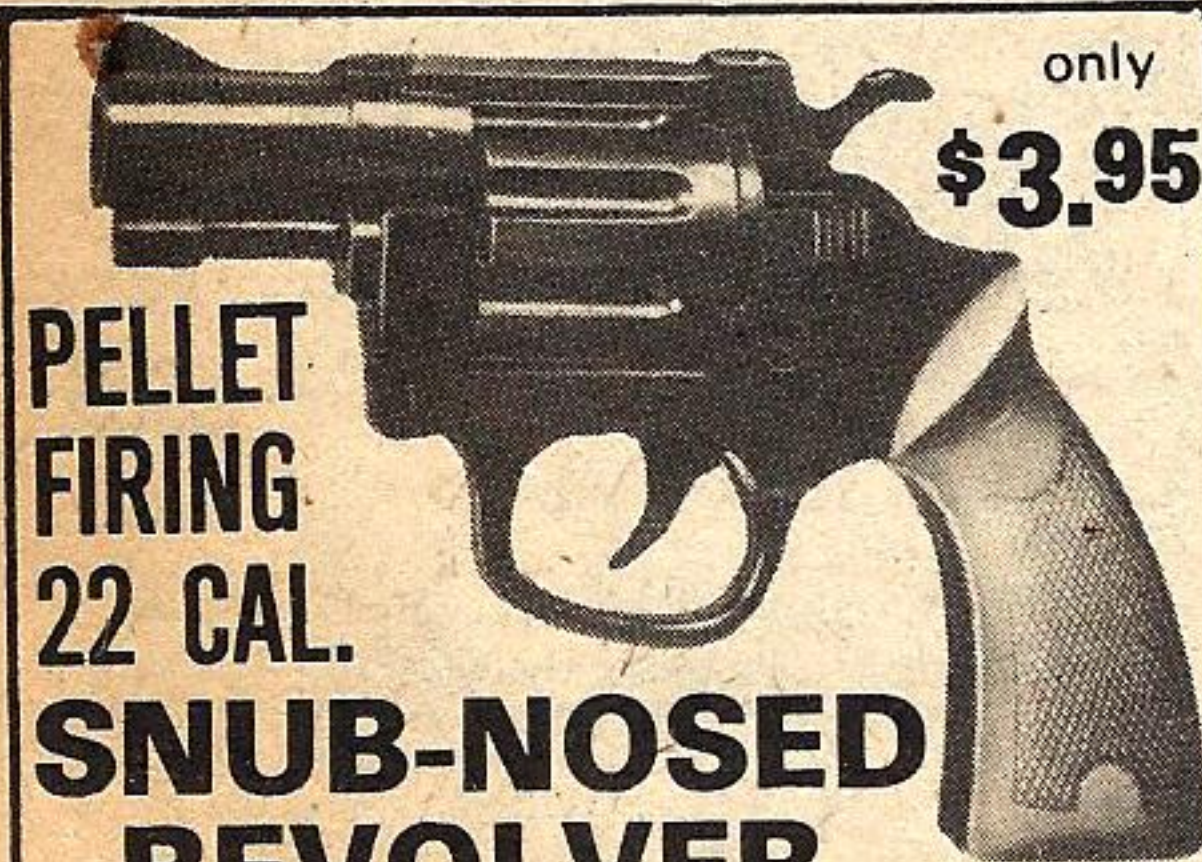
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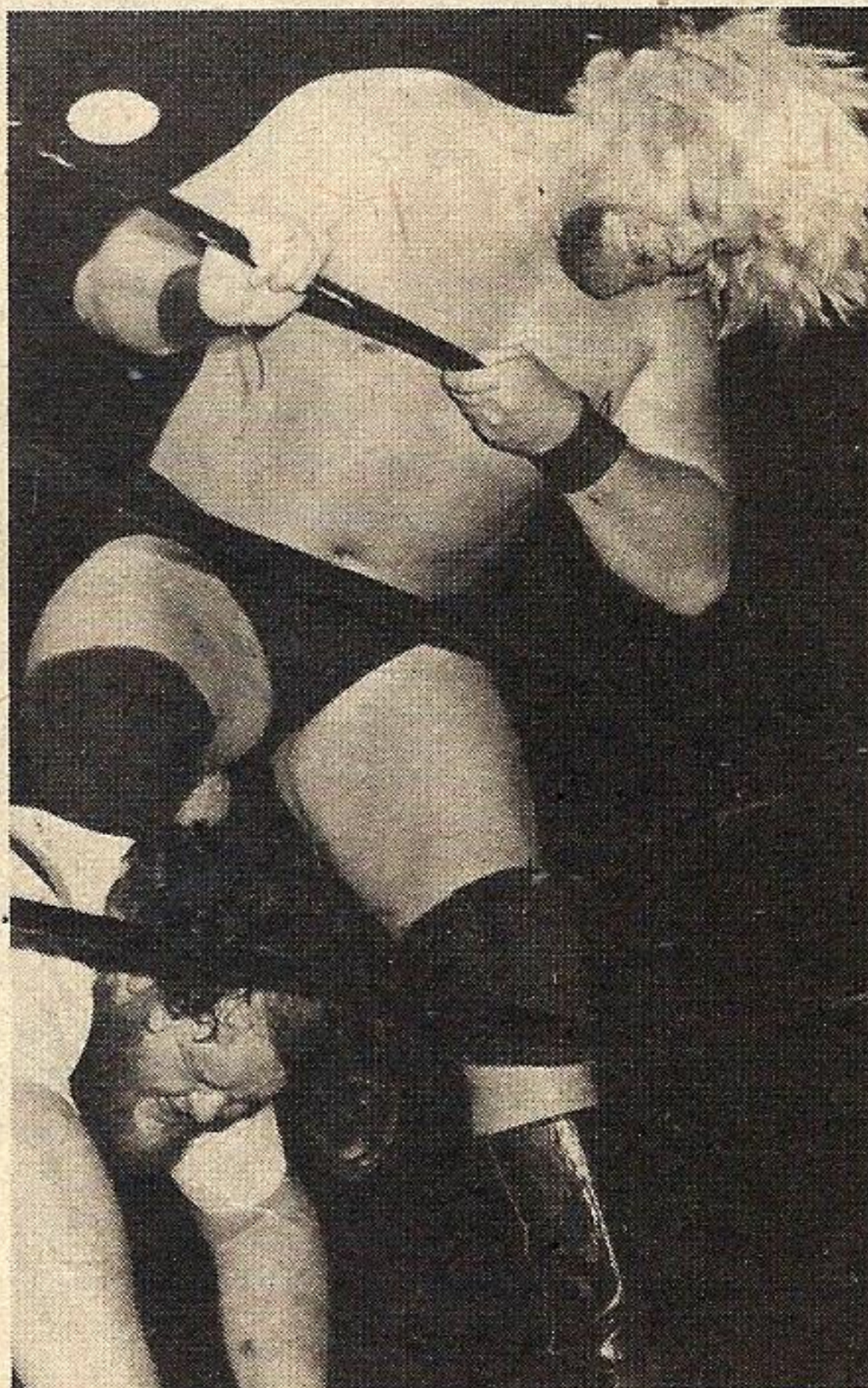
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## Stan Hansen

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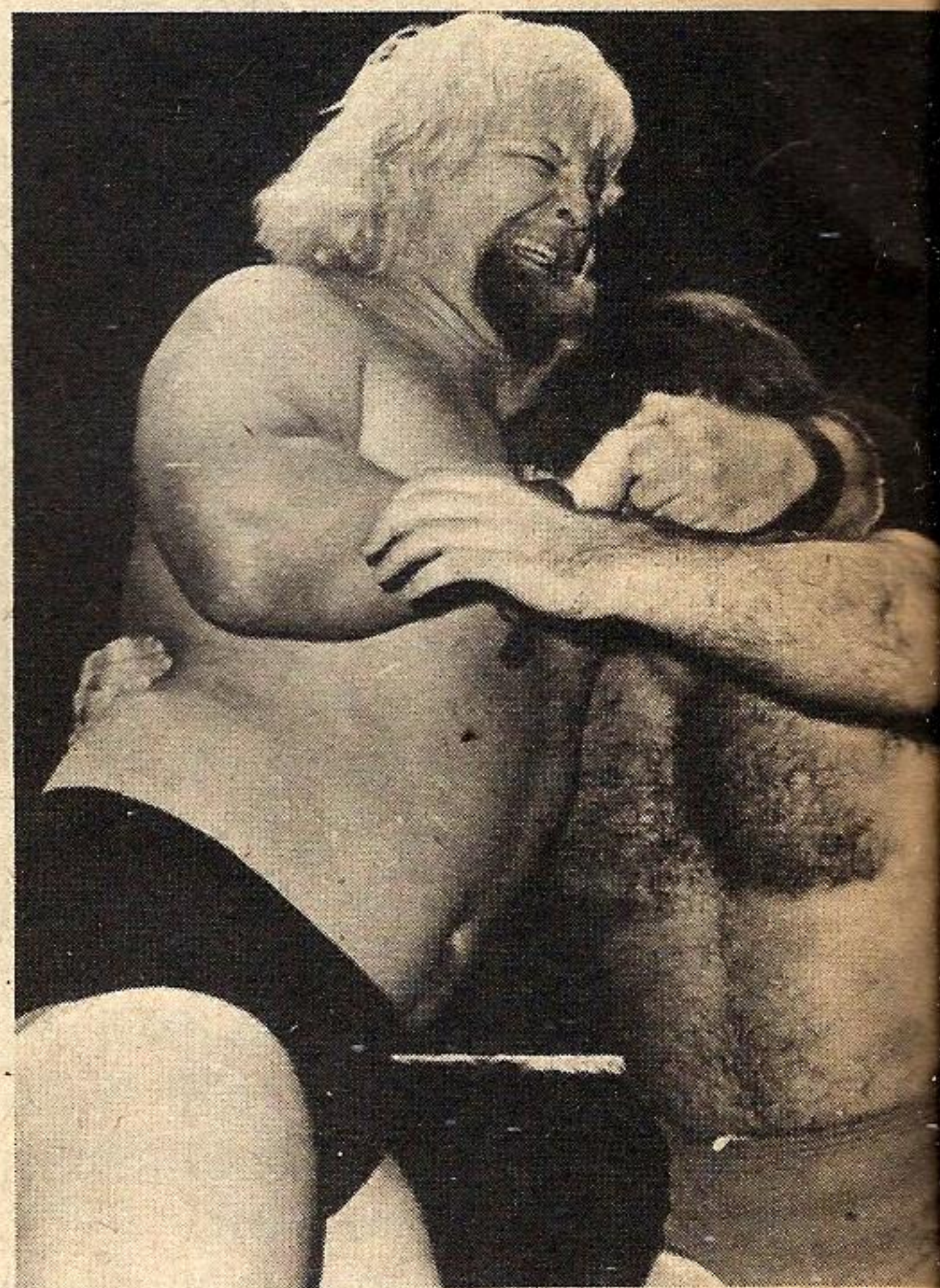
Hansen declared, "afraid to admit I'm the greatest in the world. They say I use dirty tactics. They say I fill my elbowpad with steel when I smack someone with the lariat. That's nonsense and they know it. They're afraid of me, so they hate me. Who cares what some cowards think, anyway? I never met a fan who knew the first thing about wrestling."

Hansen was only one of many men who received a sizeable vote, which says something about the state of wrestling.



There were over 80 people mentioned as the worst rulebreaker of all, proving there is a large and dangerous collection of rulebreakers in the sport. It's a reflection of the widespread influence cheating has in the sport. Many believe rulebreakers are the dominant force in wrestling, forcing the scientific wrestlers to bend to their wills. It's a sad commentary.

One of the more interesting ballots failed to write in the name of a wrestler in this



category. John Chase, of Taos, New Mexico, wrote an explanation of the omission.

"If we allow the rulebreakers to think they're gaining a reputation," he believes, "then we're only encouraging others to follow in their footsteps. These men should be ignored, not singled out, even for damnation. They don't deserve notoriety or consideration. I think this category does a great deal of harm to wrestling and no good whatsoever. Please consider this and eliminate the category."

Though we feel the fans have a right to vote for "Villain of the Year" as a way of expressing disgust, there is merit in Chase's arguments. Therefore, we're asking the fans to vote on whether or not this category should be eliminated next year. Though we think it's important, the will of the fans is more important still. Please write this magazine for your opinions.

This year, Stan Hansen is "Villain of the Year." Next year, who knows what will happen. □



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## Bob Backlund

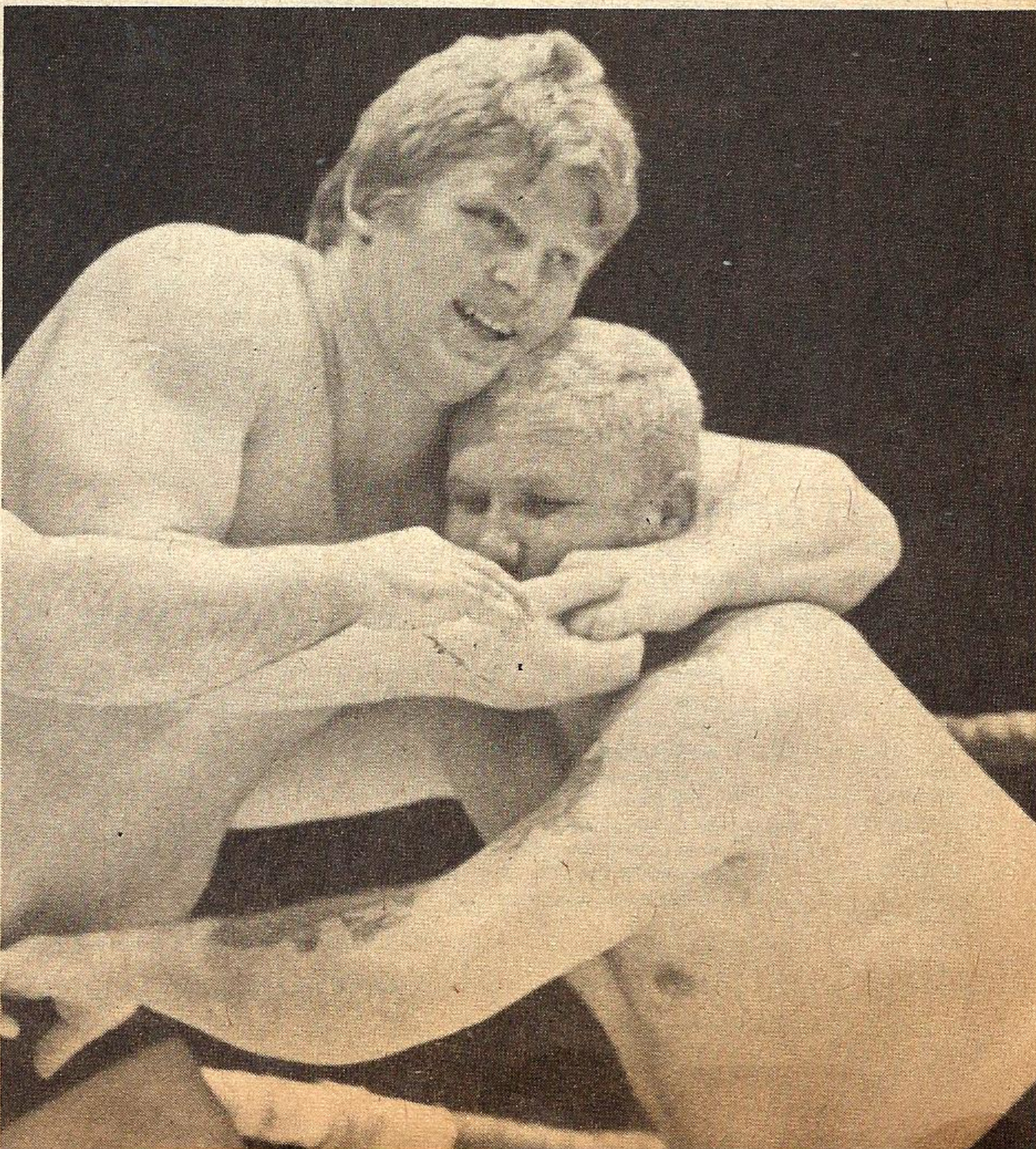
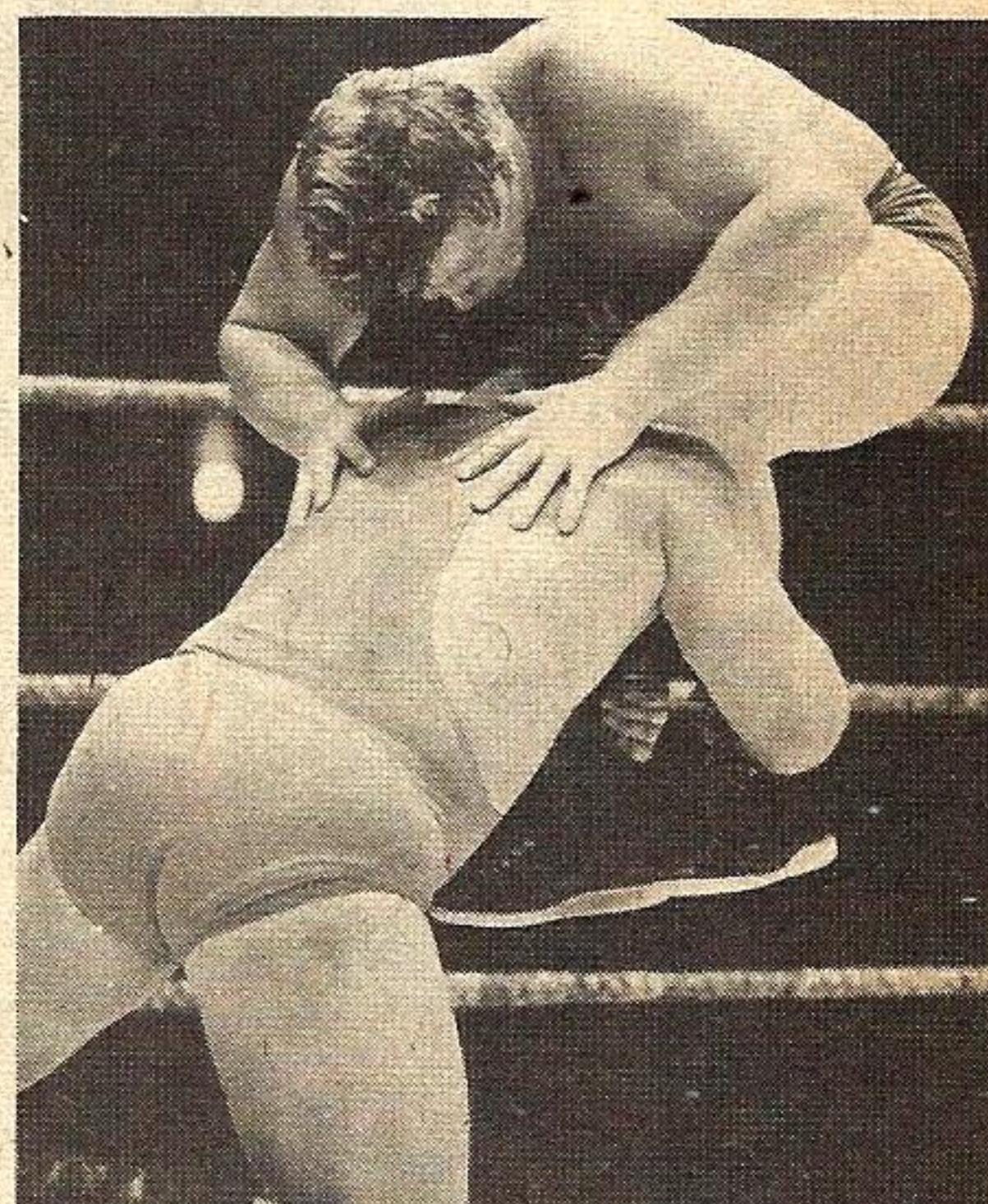
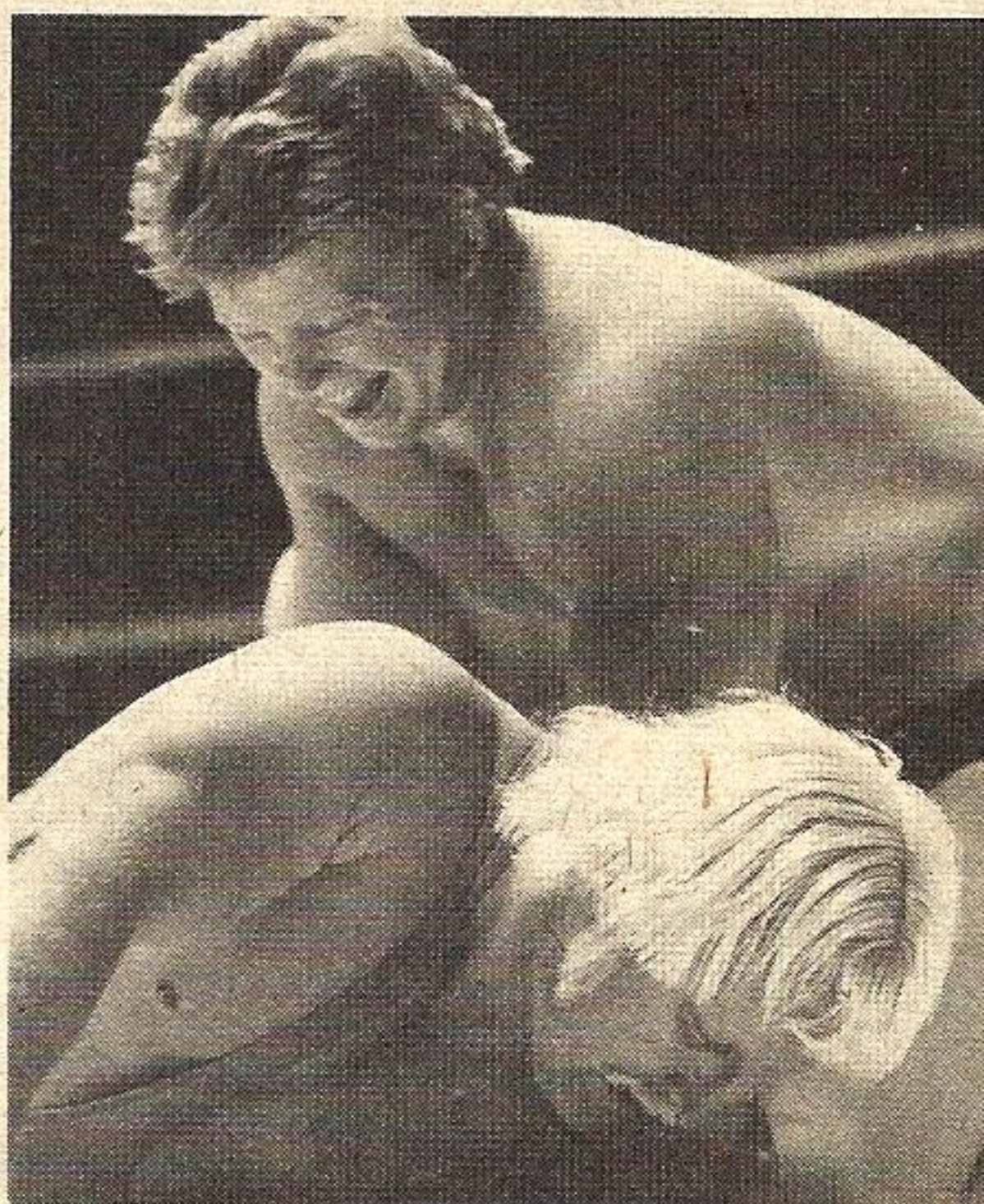
(Continued from Page 43)

and I just can't believe it.

"I'd like to thank all the fans. I wish I could tell them personally. This is just incredible! To be thought as good as Chavo, much less better; it is just fantastic. The award really means something when it is won over a guy like Guerrero. This is the

perfect ending to the greatest year of my life!"

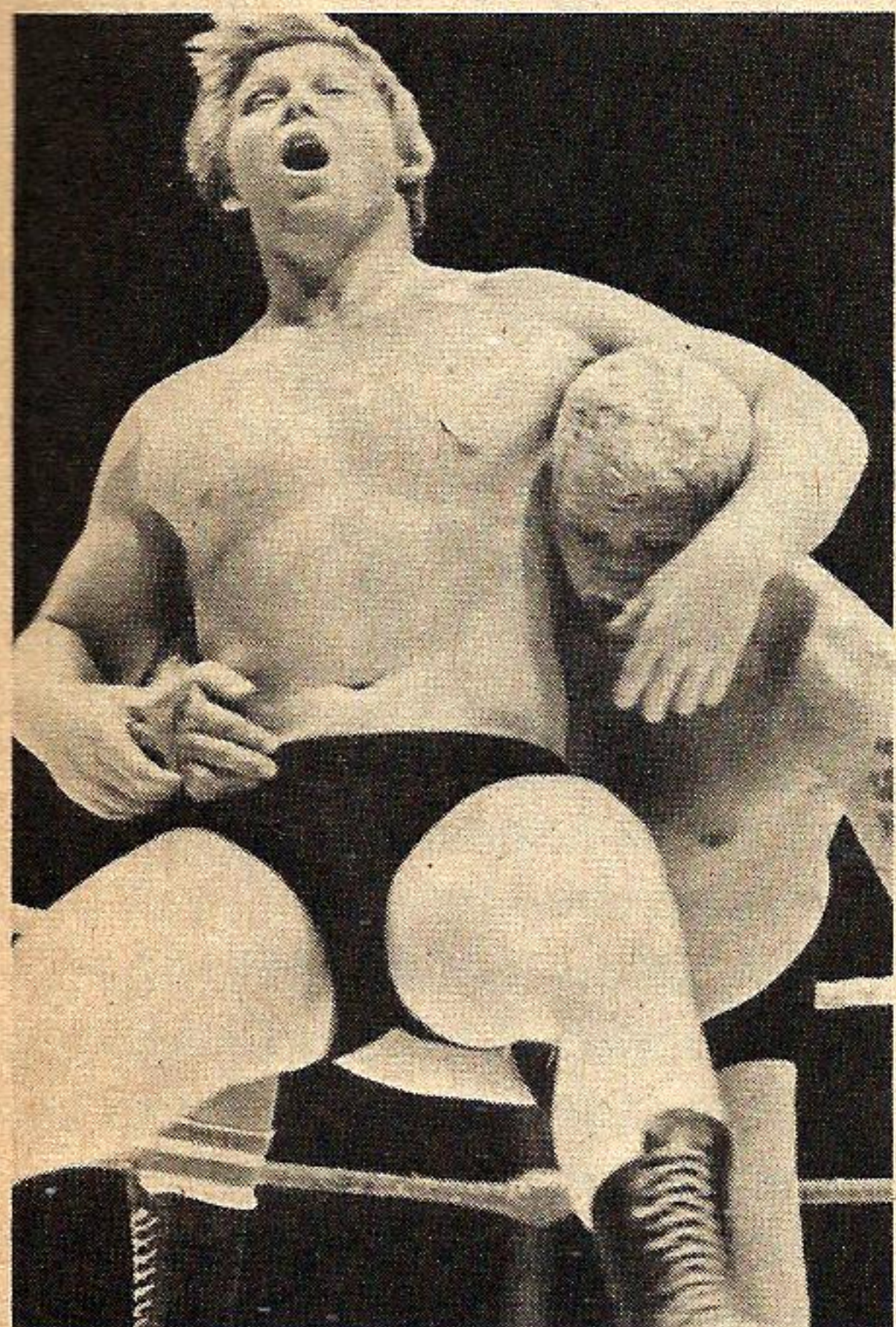
The other two men mentioned were Steve Keirn and Johnny Rivera. Many observers believe Keirn would have scored better if he'd not allowed his career to be sidetracked. A fiercely loyal young man, Keirn took on a lot of





experienced veterans to help out his friends. He should never have been subjected to them in his rookie year. If Steve had thought more of his career and less of his friends, he might have won more of the votes. However, knowing Keirn, one knows he'd rather win his friends' thanks than all the awards in the world.

Johnny Rivera never really had a chance to show his abilities in front of a varied enough cross-section of people. With a little more exposure, he might have garnered many more



votes.

This lack of traveling also hurt the many other rookies named. These men chose to develop strong followings among a small group of fans. Their decision not to display their skills in many arenas can be blamed for their poor showings in the polls, though many letters accompanying the ballots sing their praises to the skies. We are forwarding these compliments to the wrestlers.

However, if all the rookies had traveled the entire world, chances are Bob Backlund would still have squeezed out a victory. He is an extraordinary young man with a fantastic future. ☐

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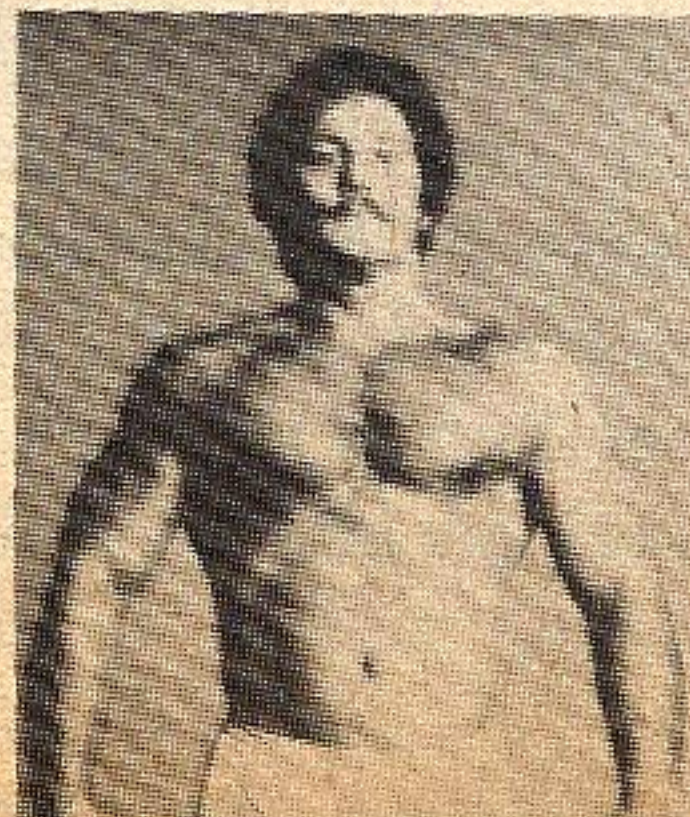
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